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THE CASE OF REASON, OR Natural Religion,

Fairly and Fully Stated.

In ANSWER to a BOOK, entitul'd,

Chriſtianity as old as the Creation.

By *WILLIAM LAW*, M. A.

PART I.

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THE

THE
INTRODUCTION,

Shewing the

STATE of the Controverſy.

THE infidelity which is now openly declar'd for, pretends to ſupport itſelf upon the *ſufficiency*, *excellency* and *abſolute perfection* of Reaſon, or Natural Religion.

The author with whom I am here engag'd, makes no attempt to diſprove or invalidate that *hiſtorical evidence* on which Chriſtianity is founded; but by arguments drawn from the nature of God, and natural Religion, pretends to prove, that no Religion can come from God, which teaches any thing more than that, which is fully manifeſt to all mankind by the *mere light* of nature.

His chief principles may be reduc'd to theſe following propoſitions.

1. That human reaſon, or natural light, is the *only means* of knowing all that God requires of us.

2. That

2. That reaſon, or natural light, is ſo full, ſufficient, plain and certain a rule or guide in all religious duties, that no external divine revelation can add any thing to it, or require us to believe or practiſe any thing, that was not as fully known before. A revelation, if ever made, can only differ from natural religion in the manner of its being communicated. It can only declare thoſe very *ſame* things *externally*, which were before equally declar'd by the *internal* light of nature.

3. That this muſt be the caſe of natural and reveal'd religion, unleſs God be an arbitrary Being. For if God be not an arbitrary Being, but acts according to the reaſon and nature of things; then he can require nothing of us by revelation, but what is already requir'd by the nature and reaſon of things. And therefore, as he expreſſes it, *reaſon and revelation muſt exactly anſwer one another like two tallies* *.

4. That whatever is at any time admitted as matter of religion, that is not manifeſt from the reaſon of the thing, and plainly requir'd by the light of nature, is groſs ſuperſtition.

5. That it is inconſiſtent with the divine perfections to ſuppoſe, that God can by an external

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external revelation give any religious light or knowledge, at *any time*, to *any people*, which was not equally given at *all* times, and to *all* people.

This is the ſtate of the controverſy. As to the railing accuſations and ſcurrilous language which this author pours out, at all adventures, upon the Chriſtian Clergy, I ſhall wholly paſs them over; my intention being only to appeal to the reaſon of the reader, and to add nothing to it, but the ſafe, unerring light of divine revelation.

BOOKS printed for W. INNYS.

1. MR. *Law*'s three Letters to the Biſhop of *Bangor*. The eighth Edition. 8*vo*.

2. ——Practical Treatiſe upon Chriſtian Perfection. The ſecond Edition. 8*vo*.

3. ——Serious Call to a devout and holy Life; adapted to the State and Condition of all Orders of Chriſtians. 8*vo*.

4. ——Remarks on a late Book, entitul'd, The Fable of the Bees, or private Vices publick Benefits. In a Letter to the Author. To which is added, A Poſtſcript, containing an Obſervation or two upon Mr. *Bayle*. Second Edition. 8*vo*.

5. Scripture vindicated, in Anſwer to a Book, entitul'd, Chriſtianity as old as the Creation. 8*vo*.

6. The general Uſe and Perſpicuity of the Goſpel aſſerted. In a Diſcourſe, in part deliver'd at the Viſitation of the Right Reverend the Lord Biſhop of *Peterborough*, held in *June* 1730. at *Oundle:* Wherein ſome Objections to the Truth and Credibility of external Revelation, contain'd in a Book, entitul'd, Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, *&c.* are occaſionally conſider'd. By *H. Lee*, D. D. Rector of *Tichmarſh* in *Northamptonſhire*.

7. A Defence of the Biſhop of *London*'s ſecond Paſtoral Letter, againſt the Exceptions advanc'd in a late Piece, entitul'd, A Plea for the Sufficiency of human Reaſon in Matters of Religion. By *John Browne*, M. A. Curate of *Richmond* in *Surrey*, and Chaplain to his Royal Highneſs the Prince of *Wales*.

CHAP. I.

Enquiring, whether there be any thing in the nature *and* condition *of man, to* oblige *him to think, that he is not to admit of any doctrines or inſtitutions, as reveal'd from God, but ſuch as his own Reaſon can prove to be neceſſary from the nature of things.*

I Begin with enquiring what there is to *oblige* a man to hold this opinion, becauſe if there is not ſome ſtrong and plain proof ariſing from the *nature* and *condition* of man, to *oblige* him thus to abide by the ſole light of his own Reaſon; it may be ſo far from being a duty, which he owes to God, that it may be reckon'd amongſt his moſt criminal preſumptions. And the pleading for

this authority of his own Reaſon, may have the guilt of pleading for his greateſt vanity. And if, as this Writer obſerves, *ſpiritual pride be the worſt ſort of pride*,* a confident reliance upon our own Reaſon, as having a right to determine all matters between God and man, if it ſhould prove to be a *groundleſs pretenſion*, bids fair to be reckon'd the higheſt inſtance of the *worſt* kind of the worſt of ſins.

Every other inſtance of vanity, every degree of perſonal pride, and ſelf eſteem, may be a pardonable weakneſs in compariſon of this. For how ſmall is that pride which only makes us prefer our own perſonal beauty or merit to that of our fellow creatures, when compar'd with a ſelf-confiding Reaſon, which is too haughty to adore any thing in the divine counſels, which it cannot fully comprehend; or to ſubmit to any directions from God, but ſuch as its own wiſdom could preſcribe? Thus much is certain, that there can be no *medium* in this matter. The claiming this authority to our own Reaſon, muſt either be a very great duty, or amongſt the greateſt of ſins.

If it be a *ſin* to admit of any *ſecrets* in divine providence, if it be a *crime* to aſcribe wiſdom and goodneſs to God in things we cannot comprehend. If it be a *baſeneſs* and *meanneſs* of ſpirit to believe that God can teach us *better*, or *more* than we can teach

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ourſelves.

ourſelves. If it be a *ſhameful apoſtacy* from the dignity of our nature, to be humble in the hands of God, to ſubmit to any *myſterious providence* over us, to comply with any other methods of *homage* and *adoration* of him, than ſuch as we could of ourſelves contrive and juſtify, then it is certainly a great duty to aſſert and maintain this authority of our own Reaſon.

On the other hand; If the profoundeſt humility towards *God*, be the higheſt inſtance of piety. If every thing within us and without us, if every thing we know of God, every thing we know of ourſelves, preaches up humility to us, as the foundation of every virtue, as the life and ſoul of all holineſs. If *ſin* had its beginning from *pride*, and *hell* be the effect of it, if *devils* are what they are through ſpiritual pride and ſelf-conceit, then we have great reaſon to believe, that the claiming this authority to our Reaſon in oppoſition to the reveal'd wiſdom of God, is not a frailty of *fleſh* and *blood*, but that ſame ſpiritual pride which turn'd *Angels* into *apoſtate* Spirits.

Since therefore this appealing to our own Reaſon, as the abſolutely *perfect meaſure and rule* of all that ought to paſs between God and man, has an *appearance* of a pride of the *worſt* kind, and ſuch as unites us both in temper and conduct with the fallen ſpirits of the kingdom of darkneſs, it highly concerns every pleader on that ſide, to con-

ſider what grounds he proceeds upon, and to ask himſelf, what there is in the *ſtate* and *condition* of human nature, to oblige him to think that nothing can be *divine* or *holy*, or *neceſſary*, in religion, but what *human* Reaſon dictates.

I hope the reader will think this a fair ſtate of the caſe, and that all the light we can have in this matter, muſt ariſe from a thorough conſideration of the *ſtate* and *condition* of man in this world. If without revelation he is free from myſteries as a *moral* and *religious* agent, then he has ſome plea from his *ſtate* and *condition* to reject *reveal'd* myſteries.

But if in a ſtate of natural religion, and mere morality, he can't acknowledge a divine providence, or worſhip and adore God without *as much* implicit faith, and humble ſubmiſſion of his Reaſon, as any reveal'd myſteries require; then his *ſtate* and *condition* in the world, condemns his refuſal of any revelation ſufficiently atteſted to come from God. This enquiry therefore into the ſtate and condition of man, being ſo plainly the true point of this controverſy, I hope to obtain the reader's impartial attention to it.

Had mankind continued in a ſtate of *perfect innocence*, without ever failing in their duty either to God or man, yet even in ſuch a ſtate, they could never have known what God would, or would not reveal to them,

them, but by ſome expreſs revelation from him. And as God might intend to raiſe them to ſome higher, and unknown ſtate of perfection; ſo he might raiſe them to it by the revelation of ſuch things as their own Reaſon tho' innocent and uncorrupt, yet could not have diſcovered.

But if man, in a ſtate of *innocence*, could have no pretence to ſet himſelf againſt divine revelation, and make his own Reaſon the *final judge* of what God could, or could not reveal to him; much leſs has he any pretence for ſo doing in his preſent ſtate of *ſin*, *ignorance*, and *miſery*. His *nature* and *condition* is ſo far from furniſhing him with reaſons againſt revelation, againſt any *ſupernatural* help from God; that it ſeems to be inconſolable without it; and every circumſtance of his life prepares him to hope for terms of *mercy* and deliverance from his preſent guilt and miſery, not according to *ſchemes* of his *own* contrivance, not from his *own knowledge* of the *nature*, and *reaſon*, and *fitneſs* of things, but from ſome *incomprehenſible depth* of divine goodneſs.

For if ſin and miſery, and ignorance cannot convince us of our own weakneſs, cannot prepare us to accept of any *methods* of *attoning* for our guilt, but ſuch as our own guilty diſorder'd Reaſon can ſuggeſt, we are not far from the harden'd ſtate of thoſe miſerable ſpirits that make war againſt God.

For

For to inſiſt upon the *prerogative* of our own nature, as qualifying us to make our own peace with God, and to reject the *attonement* which he has provided for us, becauſe we eſteem it more fit and reaſonable, that our *own repentance* ſhould be ſufficient without it, is the ſame height of *pride* and *impiety*, as to affirm that we have no need of any repentance at all.

For as mankind, if they had continued in a ſtate of *Innocence*, could not have known how their innocence was to be rewarded, or what changes of ſtate God intended them for, but as revelation had diſcover'd theſe things unto them: So after they were *fallen* into a ſtate of guilt and ſin, they could never know what *effects* it was to have upon them, what *miſery* it would expoſe them to, or *when*, or *how*, or whether they were ever to be deliver'd from it, and made as happy as if they had *never* ſinn'd; theſe are things that nothing but a revelation from God could teach them.

So that for a Sinner to pretend to appoint the *attonement* for his own Sins, or to think himſelf able to tell what it *ought* to be, or what *effect* it muſt have with God, is as fooliſh and vain a preſumption, as if man in *innocence* ſhould have pretended to appoint his own method of being changed into a *Cherubim*.

The Writers againſt Revelation appeal to the *Reaſon* and *Nature* of things, as *infalli-*

bly

bly discovering every thing that a Revelation from God can teach us.

Thus our Author, *If the relations between things, and the fitness resulting from thence, be not the sole Rule of God's actions, must not God be an arbitrary Being? But if God only commands what the nature of things shew to be fit, 'tis scarce possible that men should mistake their duty, since a mind that is attentive, can as easily distinguish fit from unfit, as the Eye can beauty from deformity* *.

It is granted that there is a fitness and unfitness of actions founded in the nature of things, and resulting from the relations that persons and things bear to one another. It is also granted, that the reasonableness of most of the duties of children to their parents, of parents to their children, and of men to men, is very apparent, from the relations they bear to one another; and that several of the Duties which we owe to God, plainly appear to us, as soon as we acknowledge the relation that is between God and us.

But then all this granted, this *whole argument* proves directly the contrary to that which this author intended to prove by it.

I here therefore join with this Author: I readily grant, that the Nature, Reason and Relations of things and persons, and the fitness of actions resulting from thence, is the *sole rule* of God's actions. And I appeal

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peal to this one common and confeſſed principle, as a ſufficient proof that a man cannot thus abide by the *ſole Light* of his own Reaſon, without contradicting the nature and reaſon of things, and denying this to be the *ſole Rule* of God's actions.

For if the *fitneſs* of actions is founded in the *nature* of things and perſons, and this fitneſs be the *ſole Rule* of God's actions, it is certain that the Rule by which he acts, muſt in many inſtances be *entirely* inconceiveable by us, ſo as not to be known *at all*, and in no inſtances *fully* known, or *perfectly* comprehended.

For if God is to act according to a *fitneſs founded* in the *nature* of things, and nothing can be fit for him to do, but what has its fitneſs founded in his own *divinely perfect* and *incomprehenſible* nature, muſt he not neceſſarily act by a Rule *above* all human comprehenſion? This argument ſuppoſes that he cannot do what is *fit* for him to do, unleſs what he does has its *fitneſs* founded in his *own Nature*; but if he muſt govern his actions by his own nature, he muſt act by a *Rule* that is juſt as *incomprehenſible* to us as his own nature.

And we can be no farther *competent judges* of the *fitneſs* of the conduct of God, than we are competent judges of the divine nature; and can no more tell what is, or is not *infinitely wiſe* in God, than we can raiſe our ſelves to a *ſtate* of infinite wiſdom.

So

So that if the *fitneſs* of actions is founded in the *particular nature* of things and perſons, and the fitneſs of God's actions muſt ariſe from that which is *particular* to his nature, then we have from this argument, the *utmoſt certainty* that the *Rule* or *Reaſons* of God's actions muſt in many caſes be entirely inconceiveable by us, and in no caſes perfectly and fully apprehended; and for this very reaſon, becauſe he is not an *arbitrary being*, that acts by *mere will*, but is govern'd in every thing he does, by the reaſon and nature of things. For if he is not arbitrary, but acts according to the nature of things, then he muſt act according to his *own nature*. But if his own nature muſt be the *reaſon*, *rule* and *meaſure* of his actions; if they are only fit and reaſonable, becauſe they are according to this *Rule and Reaſon*, then it neceſſarily follows, that the fitneſs of many of God's actions muſt be incomprehenſible to us, *merely* for this reaſon, becauſe they have their *proper fitneſs*; ſuch a fitneſs as is founded in the divine nature.

How miſtaken therefore is this author, when he argues after this manner. *If God requires things of us, whoſe fitneſs our Reaſon can't prove from the nature of things, muſt he not be an arbitrary being?* For how can that prove God to be an arbitrary agent, which is the neceſſary conſequence of his not being arbitrary?

For ſuppoſing God to be an arbitrary Being, there would then be a bare poſſibility of our comprehending the fitneſs of every thing he required of us. For as he might act by *mere will*, ſo he might chuſe to act according to our nature, and ſuitable to our comprehenſions, and not according to his own nature, and infinite perfections.

But ſuppoſing God not to be an *arbitrary Being*, but to act conſtantly, as the perfections of his own nature make it *fit* and *reaſonable* for him to act, then there is an utter impoſſibility of our comprehending the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of many of his actions.

For inſtance, look at the *reaſon* of things, and the *fitneſs* of actions, and tell me how they mov'd God to create mankind in the ſtate and condition they are in. Nothing is more above the reaſon of men, than to explain the reaſonableneſs and infinite wiſdom of God's Providence in creating man of ſuch a *form* and *condition*, to go through *ſuch* a ſtate of things as human life has ſhewn itſelf to be. No revealed myſteries can more exceed the Comprehenſion of man, than the ſtate of human life itſelf.

Shew me according to what *fitneſs* founded in the *nature* of things, God's infinite wiſdom was determin'd to form you in ſuch a manner, bring you into ſuch a world, and ſuffer and preſerve *ſuch a ſtate* of things, as human life is, and then you may have ſome pretence

pretence to believe no revealed doctrines, but such as your own reason can deduce from the nature of things and the fitness of actions.

But whilst your own *form*, whilst *Creation* and *Providence* are depths, which you cannot thus look into, 'tis strangely absurd to pretend, that God cannot reveal any thing to you as a matter of religion, except your own reason can shew its foundation in the nature and reason of things.

For does not your own *make*, and *constitution*, the reasonableness of God's providence, and the *fitness* of the State of human life, as much concern you, as any *revealed* doctrines? Is it not as *unfit* for God to create man in such a *state*, subject to such a *course* of providence, as he can't *prove* to be founded in the *fitness* and *reasonableness* of things; as to reveal to him such truths, or methods of salvation, as he cannot by any arguments of his own prove to be necessary?

Revelation, you say, is on your account, and therefore you ought to see the *reasonableness* and *fitness* of it. And don't you also say, that God has made you for your *own sake*, ought you not therefore to know the reasonableness and fitness of God's forming you as you are? Don't you say that providence is for the *sake* of Man? is it not therefore fit and reasonable, in the nature of things, that there should be no *mysteries* or *secrets* in providence, but that man should

ſo ſee its methods, as to be able to prove all its ſteps to be conſtantly fit and reaſonable?

Don't you ſay, that the *world* is for the *ſake* of man; is it not therefore fit and reaſonable that man ſhould ſee, that the *paſt* and *preſent* ſtate of the world has been ſuch as the reaſon and fitneſs of things requir'd it ſhould be?

Now if the *imperfect* ſtate of human nature, the *miſeries* and *calamities* of this life, the *diſeaſes* and mortality of human bodies, the *methods* of God's continual providence in governing human affairs, are things that as much concern us, and as nearly relate to us, as any methods of reveal'd religion; and if theſe are things that we cannot examine or explain, according to any *fitneſs* or *unfitneſs* founded in the *nature* of things, but muſt believe a great deal more of the infinite wiſdom of God, than we can ſo explain; have we any reaſon to think, that God cannot, or ought not to raiſe us out of this unhappy ſtate of things, help us to an higher order of life, and exalt us to a nearer enjoyment of himſelf, by any means, but ſuch as our own poor Reaſon can grope out of the nature and fitneſs of things?

Now what is the reaſon, that all is thus myſterious and unmeaſurable by human Reaſon, in theſe matters ſo nearly concerning human nature? 'Tis becauſe God is not an *arbitrary Being*, but does that which the *incomprehenſible perfections* of his own nature,

ture, make it *fit* and *reaſonable* for him to do. Do but grant that nothing can be *fit* for God to do, but what is *according* to his own *infinite perfections:* Let but this be the *rule* of his actions, and then you have the *fulleſt* proof, that the fitneſs of his actions muſt be above our comprehenſion, who can only judge of a *fitneſs* according to our *own perfections*; and then we muſt be ſurrounded with myſtery for this very reaſon, becauſe God acts according to a *certain rule*, his own Nature.

Again: What is the nature of a human ſoul, upon what *terms*, and in what manner it is *united* to the body, how far it is *different* from it, how far it is *ſubject* to it, what powers and faculties it *derives* from it; are things wherein the *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* of God, and the *happineſs* of man are deeply concern'd. It is not neceſſary that theſe things ſhould have their foundation in the *reaſon* and *fitneſs* of things, and yet who can ſhew that this *ſtate* of ſoul and body is founded in the reaſon and fitneſs of things?

Again: The *origin* of the ſoul, at what time it enters into the body, whether it be *immediately* created at its entrance into the body, or comes out of a *pre-exiſtent ſtate*, are things that cannot be known from any fitneſs or reaſonableneſs founded in the nature of things; and yet it is as neceſſary to believe this is done according to *certain rea-*

ſons

ſons of wiſdom and goodneſs, as to believe there is a God.

Now who can ſay that it is the ſame thing, whether human ſouls are created *immediately* for human bodies, or whether they come into them out of ſome *pre-exiſtent ſtate?* For ought we know, one of theſe ways may be exceeding *fit* and *wiſe*, and the other as entirely *unjuſt* and *unreaſonable*, and yet when Reaſon examines either of theſe ways, it finds itſelf *equally perplex'd* with difficulties, and knows not which to chuſe; and yet if ſouls are immaterial (as all philoſophy now proves) it muſt be one of them.

Who can ſay that it is the ſame thing to man, as a *moral agent*, or that he is to have the ſame treatment from God, or that the ſame *kinds* or *degrees* of piety muſt be exactly requir'd, whether human ſouls be *fallen ſpirits*, that pre-exiſted before the creation of bodies, or were *immediately* created as bodies were prepar'd for them?

Now here comes another act of *implicit faith* in natural religion, in a point of the *greateſt moment* to the moral world. For as to God's proceeding in this matter of the greateſt *juſtice* or *injuſtice* in his conduct over us, we have no ability to examine into it by any pretended fitneſs or unfitneſs founded in the nature of things; but are forc'd to *believe* that God deals with us according to infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, or elſe

elſe be amongſt thoſe judicious believers, that believe there is no God.

And perhaps the Reaſon why God has revealed ſo little of theſe matters in holy ſcripture it ſelf, is, becauſe any more particular revelation of them, would but have perplex'd us with greater difficulties, as not having capacities or ideas to comprehend ſuch things. For as all our natural knowledge is confin'd to ideas borrow'd from *experience*, and the uſe of our *ſenſes* about *human things*, as revelation can only teach us things, that have ſome likeneſs to what we already know, as our notions of equity and juſtice are very limited, and confin'd to certain actions between man and man, ſo if God had reveal'd to us more particularly, the *origin* of our ſouls, and the *reaſon* of their ſtate in human bodies, we might perhaps have been expos'd to greater difficulties by ſuch knowledge, and been leſs able to vindicate the juſtice and goodneſs of God, than we are by our preſent ignorance.

Again; the origin of *ſin* and *evil*, or how it enter'd into the world conſiſtently with the infinite wiſdom of God, is a myſtery of *natural religion*, which reaſon cannot unfold. For who can ſhew from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things, that it was *fit* and *reaſonable*, for the providence of God to ſuffer ſin and evil to enter, and continue in the world as they have? Here therefore the man of natural religion muſt drop his me-

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thod of reaſoning from the nature and fitneſs of things, and that in an article of the higheſt concern to the moral world, and be as mere a believer, as he that believes the moſt incomprehenſible myſtery of reveal'd religion.

Now as there has been in the ſeveral ages of the world, ſome *impatient*, *reſtleſs* and *preſuming* ſpirits, who becauſe they could not in theſe points explain the juſtice of God's providence, have taken refuge in horrid *Atheiſm*, ſo they made juſt the ſame *ſober uſe* of their reaſon, as our *modern unbelievers*, who becauſe they can't comprehend as they would, the *fitneſs* and *neceſſity* of certain chriſtian doctrines, reſign themſeves up to an harden'd *infidelity*. For it is juſt as wiſe and reaſonable to allow of no myſteries in *revelation*, as to allow of no myſteries or ſecrets in *creation* and *providence*.

And whenever this writer, or any other, ſhall think it a proper time, to attack *natural* religion with as much freedom, as he has now fallen upon *reveal'd*, he need not enter upon any *new* hypotheſis, or *different* way of reaſoning. For the ſame turn of thought, the ſame manner of caviling may ſoon find materials in the natural ſtate of man, for as large a bill of complaints againſt natural religion, and the myſteries of providence, as is here brought againſt reveal'd doctrines.

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To proceed: If the *fitneſs of actions is founded in the nature and relations of beings*, then nothing can be fit for God to do, but ſo far as it is fit for the *governor of all created beings*, whether on earth, or in any other part of the univerſe; and he cannot act fitly towards mankind, but by acting as is fit for the governor of all beings.

Now what is fit for the *governor* of *all created* nature to do in this or that particular part of his creation, is as much above our reaſon to *tell*, as 'tis above our power to *govern* all beings. And how mankind ought to be govern'd, with relation to the whole creation, of which they are ſo ſmall a part, is a matter equally above our knowledge, becauſe we know not how they are a part of the whole, or what relation they bear to any other part, or how their ſtate affects the whole, or any other part, than we know what beings the whole conſiſts of.

Now there is nothing that we know with more certainty, than that God is governor of the whole, and that mankind are a part of the whole; and that the uniformity and harmony of divine providence, muſt ariſe from his infinitely wiſe government of the whole; and therefore we have the utmoſt certainty, that we are *vaſtly incompetent* judges of the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any methods, that God uſes in the government of ſo ſmall a part of the univerſe, as mankind are.

For if the actions of God cannot have their *proper fitneſs*, unleſs they are according to the *incomprehenſible greatneſs* of his *own nature*, and according to his incomprehenſible greatneſs, as *Lord* and *Governor* of all created nature; have we not the moſt undeniable certainty, that the fitneſs of the divine providence over mankind, muſt be a ſecret only to be ador'd, but never comprehended in this life?

Again, if the *fitneſs of actions is founded in the relations of beings to one another*, then the fitneſs of the actions of God's providence over mankind, muſt be in many inſtances altogether myſterious and incomprehenſible to us.

For the relation which God bears to mankind, as their *all-perfect Creator* and continual *Preſerver*, is a relation that we conceive as imperfectly, and know as little of, as we do of any of the divine attributes. When we compare it to that of a *Father* and his children, a *Prince* and his ſubjects, a *Proprietor* and his property, we have explained it in the beſt manner we can, but ſtill have left it as much a *ſecret*, as we do the divine nature, when we ſay it is *infinitely* ſuperior to every thing that is *finite*.

We know with certainty, ſeveral *effects* of this relation, as that it puts us under the care and protection of a wiſe, and juſt, and merciful providence, and demands from us the higheſt inſtances of humility, duty, adora-

adoration and thankſgiving. But what it is in its own nature, what kind of *ſtate*, or degree of *dependency* it ſignifies, what it is to exiſt in and by God, what it is to ſee by a *light* that is his, to act by a power from him, to live by a *life* in him; is what we conceive as *imperfectly*, as what it is to be in the *third heavens*, or to hear words that cannot be utter'd.

But if this relation conſiſts in theſe *inconceivable* things, in a communication of *life*, *light*, and *power*, if theſe are enjoy'd in God, and in our ſelves, our own and yet his, in a manner not to be explain'd by any thing that we ever heard, or ſaw; then we muſt neceſſarily be poor judges of what is fit for God to require of us, becauſe of this *relation*. It teaches us nothing but the ſuperficialneſs of our own knowledge, and the unfathomable depths of the divine perfections.

How little this Writer has conſider'd the nature and manner of this *relation* between God and Man, may be ſeen by the following paragraphs. *The Holy Ghoſt*, ſays he, *can't deal with men as rational creatures, but by propoſing arguments to convince their underſtandings, and influence their wills, in the ſame manner as if propoſed by other agents.* As abſurd, as to ſay, God cannot *create* us as rational Beings, unleſs he creates us by ſuch means, and in the ſame *manner*, as if we were created by other agents. For to ſuppoſe that

other agents can poſſibly act upon our underſtanding, and will, in the *ſame manner* that God does; is as groſs an abſurdity, as to ſuppoſe that other agents can create us in the ſame manner that God creates us.

And to *confine* the manner of the Holy Ghoſt's acting upon us, to the manner of our acting upon one another by *arguments* and *ſyllogiſms*, is as great weakneſs, as to *confine* the manner of God's creating us, to the manner of our making a *Statue* with *tools* and *inſtruments*.

But he proceeds and ſays, *For to go beyond this, would be making impreſſions on men, as a ſeal does on wax; to the confounding of their reaſon, and their liberty in chuſing; and the man would then be merely paſſive, and the action would be the action of another being acting upon him, for which he could be no way accountable* *.

Here you ſee the Holy Spirit has but theſe two poſſible ways of acting upon men, it muſt either only propoſe an argument, juſt as a man may propoſe one, or it muſt act like a *ſeal upon wax*.

I only ask this writer, Whether God communicates *life*, and *ſtrength*, and *underſtanding*, and *liberty of will* to us, only as men may communicate any thing to one another? or as a ſeal acts upon wax? If ſo, it may be granted, that the Holy Ghoſt can't act upon us any other way.

But

* *Page* 199.

But if it muſt be affirmed, that we do, by a continual influx from God, enjoy all theſe powers, and receive the continuance of all theſe faculties from him, not as men receive things from one another, nor as *wax* receives the *impreſſion* of the *ſeal*, but in a way as much above our conception, as creation is above our power; if we have all our *power* of acting, by a *continual communication* from him, and yet are free-agents, have all our *light* from him, and yet are *accountable intelligent* Beings; then it muſt be great weakneſs to affirm, that the Holy Ghoſt can't act upon us in the ſame manner: For it would be ſaying, God cannot act upon us as he does act upon us.

The ſhort of the matter is this. Either this *writer* muſt affirm, that our *rational nature*, our *underſtanding faculties*, our *power* of action, our *liberty* of will, muſt *neceſſarily* ſubſiſt without the *continual action* of God upon them, or elſe he muſt grant, that God can *act* upon our *underſtandings* and *wills*, without making us as *merely paſſive* as the wax under the ſeal.

This writer ſays, *Though the relation we ſtand into God, is not artificial, as moſt are amongſt men —— yet this does not hinder, but that we may know the end he had in being related to us as Creator and Governor, and what he requires of his creatures and ſubjects.* But how are we to know this? *This*, ſays he, *the Divine Nature*, which *contains in it all*

*all perfection and happiness, plainly points out to us**.

If he had said, since God must act over us as Creator and Governor, according to his own infinite *perfection and happiness*, therefore his conduct over us may be *very mysterious*, he had drawn a *plain* conclusion. But he proves all to be plain, because God is to govern us according to something that is not plain, according to his *own incomprehensible nature*.

His argument therefore proceeds thus. God must govern us according to his own *infinite perfection and happiness*; but we *don't know* what his infinite perfections and happiness are.

Therefore we *plainly know* how he is to govern us.

Now if this Writer is capable of taking such an argument as this to be demonstrative, 'tis no wonder that all his principles of Religion are founded upon demonstration.

But if he knows no more of what arises from the *Relation* betwixt God and his creatures, than he has here demonstrated, he might be very well content with some farther knowledge from Divine Revelation.

'Tis because of this incomprehensible Relation between God and his creatures, that we are unavoidably ignorant of what God may justly require of us, either in a state of *innocence* or *sin*. For as the fitness of actions between

* *Page* 29.

between Beings *related*, muſt reſult from their reſpective Natures, ſo the incomprehenſibility of the Divine Nature, on which the Relation between God and man is founded, makes it utterly impoſſible for us to ſay, what *kind* of *homage*, or *worſhip*, he may *fitly* require of man in a ſtate of *innocence*; or what *different* worſhip and homage he may, or muſt require of men as *ſinners*.

And to appeal to the infinite Perfections of God, as *plainly pointing this out*, is the ſame extravagance, as to appeal to the *incomprehenſibility* of God, as a plain proof of our comprehending what God is.

As to the obligations of moral or ſocial duties, which have their foundation in the conveniences of this life, and the ſeveral relations we bear to one another, theſe are the ſame in the ſtate of *Innocence* or *Sin*, and we know that we truly act according to the Divine Will, when we act according to what theſe relations require of us.

But the queſtion is, What diſtinct kind of *Homage*, or *Service*, or *Worſhip*, God may require us to render to Him, either in a ſtate of *Innocence* or *Sin*, on account of that Relation he bears to us as an all-perfect Creator and Governor?

But this is a queſtion that God alone can reſolve.

Human Reaſon cannot enter into it, it has no principle to proceed upon in it. For as the *neceſſity* of Divine Worſhip and Homage,

mage, ſo the *particular matter* and *manner* of it, muſt have its reaſon in the Divine Nature.

Sacrifice, if conſider'd only as an *human Invention*, could not be prov'd to be a reaſonable ſervice. Yet conſidered as a *Divine Inſtitution*, it would be the greateſt folly not to receive it as a reaſonable ſervice. For as we could ſee no reaſon for it, if it was of human invention, ſo we ſhould have the greateſt reaſon to comply with it, becauſe it was of Divine Appointment. Not as if the Divine Appointment alter'd the *nature* and *fitneſs* of things; but becauſe nothing has the *nature* and *fitneſs* of Divine Worſhip, but becauſe it is of Divine Appointment.

Man therefore, had he continu'd in a ſtate of Innocence, and without Revelation, might have liv'd in an awful fear, and pious regard of God, and obſerv'd every duty both of moral and civil life, as an act of obedience to him. But he could have no foundation either to invent any particular *matter* or *manner* of Divine Worſhip himſelf, or to reject any that was appointed by God as *unneceſſary*. It would have been ridiculous to have pleaded his innocence, as having no need of a Divine Worſhip? For who can have greater reaſon, or be fitter to worſhip God, than innocent Beings? It would have been more abſurd, to have objected the ſufficiency and perfection of their reaſon; for

why

why ſhould men reject a *reveal'd method and manner* of Divine Worſhip and Service, becauſe God had given them ſenſe and reaſon of their own ſufficient for the duties of ſocial and civil life?

And as reaſon in a ſtate of ſuch innocence and perfection, could not have any pretence to ſtate, or appoint the matter or manner of Divine Worſhip, ſo when the ſtate of innocence was chang'd for that of ſin, it then became more difficult for bare reaſon to know what kind of Homage, or Worſhip, could be acceptable to God from ſinners.

For what the *Relation* betwixt God and ſinners makes it fit and reaſonable for God to require or accept of them, cannot be determin'd by human reaſon.

This is a *new State*, and the foundation of a *new Relation*, and nothing can be fit for God to do in it, but what has its *fitneſs reſulting* from it. We have nothing to help our conceptions of the foremention'd *relative Characters* of God, as our *Governor* and *Preſerver*, but what we derive from our idea of human *Fathers* and *Governors*. Which idea only helps us to comprehend theſe *relations*, juſt as our idea of human power helps us to comprehend the *Omnipotence* of God. For a father, or governor, no more repreſents the *true ſtate* of God as our *Governor* and *Preſerver*, than our living in our Father's *family*, repreſents the *true manner* of our living in God.

Theſe relations are both very plain, and very myſterious; they are very plain and certain, as to the *reality* of their exiſtence; and highly myſterious and inconceivable, as to the *manner* of their exiſtence.

That which is *plain* and *certain*, in theſe relative characters of God, plainly ſhews our obligations to every inſtance of *duty*, *homage*, *adoration*, *love* and *gratitude*.

And that which is *myſterious* and *inconceivable* in them, is a juſt and ſolid foundation of that *profound humility*, *awful reverence*, *internal piety*, and *tremendous ſenſe* of the divine Majeſty, with which devout and pious perſons think of God, and aſſiſt at the *offices* and *inſtitutions* of religion. Which excites in them a higher zeal for doctrines and inſtitutions of divine revelation, than for all things human; that fills them with regard and reverence for all *things*, places, and offices, that are either by divine or human authority, appointed to aſſiſt and help their deſired intercourſe with God.

And if ſome people, by a *long* and *ſtrict* attention to *Reaſon*, clear ideas, the *fitneſs* and *unfitneſs* of things, have at laſt arrived at a demonſtrative certainty, that all theſe ſentiments of piety and devotion, are mere *bigotry*, *ſuperſtition*, and *enthuſiaſm*; I ſhall only now obſerve, that *youthful extravagance*, *paſſion*, and debauchery, by their own *natural tendency*, without the aſſiſtance of any other

other guide, ſeldom fail of making the ſame diſcovery. And tho' it is not reckon'd any reflection upon *great wits*, when they hit upon the ſame thought, yet it may ſeem ſome diſparagement of that *reaſon* and philoſophy, which teaches *old men* to think and judge the ſame of religion, that *paſſion* and *extravagance* teaches the young.

To return: As there is no ſtate in human life, that can give us a true idea of any of the forementioned relative characters of God, ſo this relative ſtate of God towards ſinners is ſtill more remote, and leſs capable of being truly comprehended by any thing obſervable in the relations, betwixt a *judge* and criminals, a *creditor* and his debtors, a *phyſician* and his patients, a father or prince, and their diſobedient children and ſubjects.

For none of theſe ſtates ſeparately, nor all of them jointly conſidered, give us any juſt idea, either of the *nature* and *guilt* of ſin, or how God is to deal with ſinners, on the account of the relation he bears to them.

And to ask, whether God in puniſhing ſinners, acts as a *phyſician* towards patients, or as a *creditor* towards debtors, or as a *prince* towards rebels, or a *judge* over criminals, is the ſame weakneſs, as to ask, whether God, as our *continual preſerver*, acts as our parents, from whom we have our *maintenance*, or as a prince, that only

protects us. For as the *maintenance* and *protection* that we receive from our parents and prince, are not proper and true repreſentations of the *nature* and *manner* of our *preſervation* in God, but only the propereſt words that human language affords us, to ſpeak of things not human, but divine and inconceivable in their own proper natures: So a *phyſician* and his patients, a *creditor* and his debtors, a *prince* and his rebels, or a *judge* over criminals, neither ſeparately nor jointly conſidered, are proper and ſtrict repreſentations of the *reaſons* and *manner* of God's proceedings with ſinners, but only help us to a more proper language to ſpeak about them, than any other ſtates of human life.

To ask, whether *ſin* hath ſolely the *nature* of an offence, againſt a prince or a father, and ſo is pardonable by mere goodneſs; whether it is like an *error* in a *road* or *path*, and ſo is entirely at an end, when the right path is taken; whether its guilt hath the nature of a debt, and ſo is capable of being diſcharged, juſt as a debt is; whether it affects the ſoul, as a *wound* or *diſeaſe* affects the body, and ſo ought only to move God to act as a good phyſician? all theſe queſtions are as vain, as to ask, whether knowledge in God is really *thinking*, or his nature a real *ſubſtance*. For as his knowledge and nature can't be *ſtrictly* defin'd, but are capable of being ſignify'd by the terms,

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thinking and *ſubſtance*, ſo the nature of ſin is not *ſtrictly repreſented* under any of theſe characters, but is capable of receiving *ſome repreſentation* from every one of them.

When ſin is ſaid to be an offence againſt God, it is to teach us, that we have infinitely more reaſon to dread it on *God's account*, than to dread any offence againſt our parents, or governors.

When it is compared to a *debt*, it is to ſignify, that our ſins make us accountable to God, not in the *ſame manner*, but with the ſame certainty, as a debtor is anſwerable to his creditor; and becauſe it has ſome likeneſs to a debt, that of ourſelves we are not able to pay.

When it is compared to a *wound*, or diſeaſe in the body, it is not to teach us, that it may as juſtly and eaſily be heal'd as bodily wounds, but to help us to conceive the greatneſs of its evil; that, as diſeaſes bring death to the body, ſo ſin brings a worſe kind of death upon the ſoul.

Since therefore the *nature* and *guilt* of ſin can only ſo far be known, as to make it highly to be *dreaded*, but not ſo known as to be *fully* underſtood, by any thing we can compare it to.

Since the *relation* which God bears to *ſinners*, can only be ſo known, as to make it highly reaſonable to proſtrate ourſelves before him, in every inſtance of humility, and penitence; but not ſo fully known as

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to teach us how, or in what manner, God muſt deal with us; it plainly follows, that if God is not an *arbitrary* Being, but acts according to a *fitneſs*, *reſulting* from this relation, then it plainly follows, that he muſt, in this reſpect, act by a *rule* or *reaſon* known only to himſelf, and ſuch as we can't *poſſibly* ſtate from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things.

This account is ſufficient, to ſhew us with how little reaſon and regard to the nature of things, *unbelievers* object againſt the *attonement* for ſins by Jeſus Chriſt.

Their firſt objection is, that *repentance alone* is a *ſufficient attonement* for ſin. Were they to affirm, that *ſinning Angels* might ſufficiently regain their former perfection by a *bare wiſh*, they would proceed as much according to their knowledge of the nature of things, as in affirming, that *ſinful man* can *merit* the pardon of his ſins by his *own repentance*. I ſay, *merit*, becauſe they, who with our *author*, hold repentance to be a *ſufficient title* to pardon, can be no farther certain of it, than ſo far as they are *certain*, that it *merits* it. And, according to this *ſcheme*, the *penitent*, who thinks he has repented, need not *beg* of God to have compaſſion upon him, but *demands* a due, which the *nature of things* gives him a right to claim.

But if the nature of things, and the fitneſs of actions reſulting from their relations,

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is to be the rule of our Reaſon, then *Reaſon* muſt be here at a full ſtop, and can have no more light or knowledge to proceed upon, in ſtating the *nature*, the *guilt*, or proper *attonement* of ſin in men, than of ſin in *Angels*.

For *Reaſon*, by conſulting the *nature* and *fitneſs* of things, can no more tell us, what the *guilt* of ſin is, what *hurt* it does us, how far it *enters* into, and *alters* our very nature, what *contrariety to*, and *ſeparation* from God, it neceſſarily brings upon us, or what *ſupernatural* means are, or are not, neceſſary to aboliſh it; our *Reaſon* can no more tell this, than our *ſenſes* can tell us, what is the *inward*, and what is the *outward* light of Angels.

Ask Reaſon, what *effect* ſin has upon the ſoul, and it can tell you no more, than if you had asked, what effect the *omnipreſence* of God has upon the ſoul.

Ask Reaſon, and the nature of things, what is, or ought to be, the *true nature* of an attonement for ſin, how far it is like *paying* a *debt*, *reconciling* a *difference*, or *healing* a *wound*, or how far it is different from them? and it can tell you no more, than if you had asked, what is the *true degree* of power that *preſerves* us in exiſtence, how far it is *like* that which at firſt created us, and how far it is *different* from it.

All theſe enquiries are, by the nature of things, made impoſſible to us; and we can only

only become *knowing*, and *philoſophers*, in theſe matters, by deſerting our Reaſon, and giving ourſelves up to *viſion* and *imagination*.

And we have as much authority from the reaſon and nature of things, to appeal to *hunger* and *thirſt*, and *ſenſual pleaſure*, to tell us *how* our ſouls ſhall live in the beatifick preſence of God, as to appeal to our *reaſon* and *logick*, to demonſtrate how ſin is to be *atton'd*, or the ſoul *alter'd*, *prepar'd*, and *purify'd*, for future happineſs.

For God has no more given us our Reaſon to *ſettle* the nature of an attonement for ſin; or to find out what can, or cannot, take away its guilt, than he has given us *ſenſes* and *appetites* to ſtate the nature, or diſcover the ingredients, of future happineſs.

And he who rejects the *attonement* for ſins made by the Son of God, as *needleſs*, becauſe he cannot prove it to be *neceſſary*, is as extravagant, as he that ſhould deny that God created him by his *only Son*, becauſe he did not *remember* it. For our memory is as proper a faculty to tell us, whether God at firſt created us, and all things, by his only Son, as our *Reaſon* is to tell us, whether we ought to be reſtored to God, with, or without the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt.

When therefore this writer ſays, *Can any thing be more evident, than that if doing evil be*

be the only cauſe of God's diſpleaſure, that the ceaſing to do evil, muſt take away that diſpleaſure? *

Juſt as if he had ſaid, if converſing with a *leper* has been the only cauſe of a man's getting a *leproſy*, muſt not departing from him, be the removal of the *leproſy?* For if any one, gueſſing at the *guilt* of ſin, and its *effects* on the ſoul, ſhould compare it to a *leproſy* in the body, he can no more ſay, that he has reach'd its *real, internal* evil, than he, that comparing the happineſs of heaven to a crown of glory, can be ſaid to have deſcrib'd its real happineſs.

This *writer* has no occaſion to appeal to reaſon, and the nature of things, if he can be thus certain, about things, whoſe nature is not only obſcure, but *impoſſible* to be known. For it is as impoſſible for him to know the *guilt* and *effects* of ſin, as to know the ſhape of an Angel. 'Tis as impoſſible to know what God's *diſpleaſure* at ſin is, what *contrariety* to, or *ſeparation* from ſinners it implies, or how it *obliges* God to deal with them; as to know what the internal eſſence of God is. Our author therefore has here found the utmoſt degree of evidence, where it was *impoſſible* for him to have the *ſmalleſt degree* of knowledge.

For tho' it is very evident, that in the caſe of ſin, Reaſon can preſcribe nothing but repentance; yet it is equally evident,

* P. 4.

that Reaſon cannot ſay, nothing more is required, to deſtroy the effects of ſin, and to put the ſinner in the *ſame ſtate*, as if it had never been committed.

If a man, having *murdered* twenty of his fellow creatures, ſhould afterward be ſorry for it, and wiſh that he had a power to bring them to life again, or to create others in their ſtead, would this be an *evident* proof, that he was no *murderer*, and that he had never killed one man in his life? Will his ceaſing to kill, and wiſhing he had a power to create others in their ſtead, be a *proof*, that he is juſt in the *ſame ſtate* with God, as if he had never murdered a man in his life? But, unleſs this can be ſaid, unleſs a man's repentance ſufficiently proves that he *never* was a ſinner, it cannot be evident, that repentance is ſufficient to put a man in the *ſame ſtate*, as if he never had ſinn'd.

He therefore that ſays, *if ſin be the only cauſe of God's diſpleaſure, muſt not ceaſing from ſin take away his diſpleaſure?* has juſt as much ſenſe and reaſon on his ſide, as if he had ſaid, if a man's *murdering* of himſelf, is the cauſe of God's diſpleaſure, muſt not his reſtoring himſelf to life again, take away God's diſpleaſure?

For there is as much foundation in reaſon, and the nature of things, to affirm, that the ſoul of a *ſelf-murderer* muſt have a ſufficient power to undo the effects of murder,

der, and put him in his former ſtate; as to affirm, that *every ſinner* muſt have a ſufficient natural power of undoing all the effects of ſin, and putting himſelf in the ſame ſtate as if he had never ſinn'd.

This objection therefore, againſt any *ſupernatural* means of attoning for ſin, taken from the *ſufficiency* of our own repentance, is as *clear* and *philoſophical*, as that *knowledge* that is without *any ideas*; and as juſtly to be rely'd upon, as that *concluſion* which has no *premiſes*.

This writer has two more objections againſt the attonement for ſin, made by Jeſus Chriſt. *Firſt*, as it is an *human ſacrifice, which nature itſelf abhors*; and which was look'd upon as the great abomination of idolatrous *pagan* worſhip.

The *cruelty*, *injuſtice*, and *impiety*, of ſhedding *human* blood in the ſacrifices of the *pagan* religion, is fully granted: but *Reaſon* cannot thence bring the ſmalleſt objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, as it was *human*.

For how can Reaſon be more diſregarded, than in ſuch an argument as this? The *pagans* were unjuſt, cruel, and impious, in offering human blood to their falſe gods, therefore the true God cannot receive any *human* ſacrifice for ſin, or allow any perſons to die, as a puniſhment for ſin.

For, if no human ſacrifice can be fit for God to receive, becauſe human ſacrifices, as

parts of *pagan* worſhip, were unjuſt and impious; then it would follow, that the *mortality*, to which all mankind are appointed by God, muſt have the *ſame cruelty* and *injuſtice* in it. Now that *death* is a puniſhment for ſin, and that all mankind are by death offer'd as a *ſacrifice* for ſin, is not only a doctrine of reveal'd Religion, but the plain dictate of Reaſon. For, tho' it is Revelation alone that can teach us, how God threaten'd death, as the puniſhment of a particular ſin, yet Reaſon muſt be obliged to acknowledge, that men die, becauſe they are ſinners. But, if men die, becauſe they are ſinners, and reaſon itſelf muſt receive this, as the moſt juſtifiable cauſe of death; then reaſon muſt allow, that the death of all mankind is received by the true God, as a *ſacrifice* for ſin. But if reaſon muſt acknowledge the death of all mankind, as a ſacrifice for ſin, then it can have no juſt objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, *becauſe* it was *human*.

Revelation therefore teaches nothing more hard to be believed on this point, than reaſon teaches. For if it be juſt and fit in God, to *appoint* and *devote* all men to death, as the proper *puniſhment*, and *means* of their deliverance from their ſins; how can it be proved to be unjuſt and unfit in God, to receive the death of Jeſus Chriſt, for the ſame ends, and to render thereby the common

death

death and ſacrifice of mankind truly effectual?

I don't pretend to prove the *fitneſs* and *reaſonableneſs* of God's procedure in the *mortality* of mankind; Revelation is not under any neceſſity of proving this; becauſe it is no difficulty that ariſes from revelation, but equally belongs to natural religion; and both of them muſt acknowledge it to be fit and reaſonable; not becauſe it can be proved to be ſo from the nature of things, but is to be believed to be ſo, by faith and piety.

But if the neceſſary faith and piety of natural religion, will not ſuffer us to think it *inconſiſtent* with the juſtice and goodneſs of God, to appoint all mankind victims to death on the account of ſin, then *reaſon*, or *natural* religion, can have no objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, as it is an *human ſacrifice*.

And all that *revelation* adds to *natural* religion, on the point of *human* ſacrifice, is only this; the knowledge of *one*, that gives *merit*, *effect*, and *ſanctification*, to all the reſt.

Secondly, It is objected, that the attonement made by Jeſus Chriſt, repreſents God as puniſhing the *innocent*, and acquitting the *guilty*; or, as puniſhing the innocent *inſtead* of the guilty.

But this proceeds all upon miſtake: for the attonement made by Jeſus Chriſt, tho'

it

it procures pardon for the guilty, yet it does not acquit them, or excuſe them from any puniſhment, or ſuffering for ſin, which *reaſon* could impoſe upon them. Natural religion calls men to repentance for their ſins: the attonement made by Jeſus Chriſt, does not acquit them from it, or pardon them without it; but calls them to a *ſeverer* repentance, a *higher* ſelf-puniſhment and penance, than natural religion, alone, preſcribes. So that *reaſon* can't accuſe this attonement, of *acquitting* the guilty; ſince it brings them under a neceſſity of doing *more*, and performing a *ſeverer* repentance, than reaſon, alone, can impoſe upon them.

God therefore does not by this proceeding, (as is unreaſonably ſaid) ſhew his *diſlike* of the *innocent*, and his *approbation* of the *wicked*.

For how can God be thought to puniſh our bleſſed Saviour out of *diſlike*, if his ſufferings are repreſented of ſuch infinite merit with him? Or how can he ſhew thereby his *approbation* of the guilty, whoſe repentance is not *acceptable* to him, till recommended by the infinite merits of Jeſus Chriſt.

Reaſon therefore has nothing that it can juſtly object, againſt the attonement made by our bleſſed Lord, either as it was an *human ſacrifice*, or as *freeing* the *guilty*, and puniſhing the innocent in their ſtead; becauſe this very ſacrifice calls people to a

higher

higher ſtate of ſuffering and puniſhment for ſin, than reaſon, alone, could oblige them to undergo.

As to the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of our bleſſed Lord's ſufferings, as he was God and man; and the *nature* and *degree* of their worth; reaſon can no more enter into this matter, or *prove* or *diſprove* any thing about it, than it can enter into the ſtate of the whole creation, and ſhew, how it could, or could not, be in the whole, better than it is.

For you may as well ask any of your *ſenſes*, as ask your *reaſon* this principal queſtion, *Whether any ſupernatural means be neceſſary for the attonement of the ſins of mankina?* Or, ſuppoſing it neceſſary, whether the *mediation*, *death*, and *interceſſion* of Jeſus Chriſt, as God and man, be that true ſupernatural means?

For as the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any *ſupernatural* means, for the attonement of ſin, muſt reſult from the *incomprehenſible relation* God bears to ſinners, as it muſt have ſuch *neceſſity*, *worth*, and *dignity*, as this relation *requires*, and becauſe it requires it; it neceſſarily follows, that if God acts according to *this relation*, the *fitneſs* of his actions cannot be according to our comprehenſion.

Again: Suppoſing ſome *ſupernatural means* to be neceſſary, for deſtroying the guilt and power of ſin; or that the *mediation*,

tion, *ſufferings*, and *interceſſion*, of the Son of God incarnate, is that true ſupernatural means, it neceſſarily follows, that a revelation of ſuch, or any other *ſupernatural* means, can't poſſibly be made obvious to our reaſon and ſenſes, as the things of human life, or the tranſactions amongſt men are; but can only be ſo revealed, as to become juſt occaſions of our *faith*, *humility*, *adoration*, and *pious reſignation*, to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs.

For, to ſay that ſuch a thing is *ſupernatural*, is only ſaying, that it is ſomething, which, by the *neceſſary ſtate* of our own nature, we are as incapable of knowing, as we are incapable of ſeeing *ſpirits*.

If therefore ſupernatural and divine things are ever revealed to us, their *nature* can't poſſibly be revealed to us; that is, they can't be revealed to us, as they are in their *own nature*: for if they could, ſuch things would not be *ſupernatural*, but ſuch as were ſuited to our capacities.

If an *angel* could appear to us, as it is in its own nature, then we ſhould be *naturally* capable of ſeeing angels; but, becauſe our nature is not *capable* of ſuch a ſight, and angels are, as to us, *ſupernatural* objects; therefore, when *angels* appear to men, they muſt appear in ſome *human*, or *corporeal* form, that their appearance may be ſuited to our capacities.

It is juſt thus, when any *ſupernatural* or *divine* matter is reveal'd by God, it can no more poſſibly be reveal'd to us, as it is in its *own nature*, than an *Angel* can appear to us, or make itſelf viſible by us as it is in its own nature; but ſuch ſupernatural matter can only be reveal'd to us, by being repreſented to us by ſomething that we already *naturally* know.

Thus revelation teaches us this *ſupernatural* matter; that Jeſus Chriſt is making *perpetual interceſſion for us in heaven*: For Chriſt's *real ſtate*, or *manner* of exiſtence with God in heaven, in regard to his Church, cannot, as it is in its *own nature*, be deſcribed to us; 'tis in this reſpect ineffable, and incomprehenſible. And therefore, this high and inconceivable manner of Chriſt's exiſtence with God in heaven, in regard to his church, is revealed to us under an idea, that gives us the trueſt repreſentation of it, that we are capable of; *viz.* the idea of a *perpetual interceſſion* for his church.

But if any one ſhould thence infer, that the Son of God muſt therefore either be always upon his knees in acts of *mental* or *vocal* prayer, or *proſtrate* in ſome humble form of a ſupplicant, he would make a very weak inference.

Becauſe this reveal'd Idea of Chriſt, as a perpetual Interceſſor in heaven, is only a comparative repreſentation of ſomething,

that cannot be *directly* and *plainly* known as it is in its own nature; and only teaches us, how to believe ſomething, tho' imperfectly, yet *truly* and *uſefully* of an incomprehenſible matter.

Juſt as our own ideas of *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* don't teach us what the divine wiſdom and goodneſs are in their *own natures*, but only help us to believe ſomething *truly* and *uſefully* of thoſe perfections of God, which are in themſelves inconceivable by us.

But then there is no inferring any thing from theſe ideas, by which divine and ſupernatural things are repreſented to us, but only the *truth* and *certainty* of that *likeneſs* under which they are repreſented.

Thus from our own idea of goodneſs in ourſelves, we can infer nothing concerning goodneſs, as it is a perfection inherent in God, but only this, that there certainly is in God ſome *inconceivable*, *infinite* perfection, *truly anſwerable* to that which we call goodneſs in ourſelves, tho' as *infinitely* different from it, as *Omnipotence* is infinitely different from all that we *naturally* know of *power*.

But then we can proceed no farther than to the *truth* and *certainty* of this *likeneſs*; we can't by any farther conſiderations of the *nature* and *manner* of goodneſs, as it is in ourſelves, infer any thing farther, as to the *nature* and *manner* of the *divine goodneſs*. This is as impoſſible, as to ſtate the real nature

nature and manner of *Omnipotence*, by conſidering the *particulars* of *human power*.

In like manner, our revealed idea of Jeſus Chriſt as an *Interceſſor* for us in heaven, gives us the utmoſt certainty that he is in heaven for our benefit, in a manner *truly* and *fully* anſwerable to that of a *powerful Interceſſor*. But if from conſidering our own ideas of *human Interceſſors*, we ſhould thence pretend to infer the *real ſupernatural* manner of Chriſt's exiſtence in heaven, we ſhould fall into the ſame abſurdity, as if we undertook to repreſent the *true* nature of *Omnipotence*, by conſidering what we knew of the *nature* and *manner* of human power.

Again: When it is reveal'd to us, that the bleſſed Jeſus is the one *Mediator* between God and man; that he is the *Atonement*, the *Propitiation* and *Satisfaction* for our ſins: Theſe expreſſions only teach us *as much* about ſo great a myſtery, as *human* language can repreſent. But they don't teach us the *real* or *perfect* nature of Chriſt's *ſtate* between God and ſinners. For that being a *divine* and *ſupernatural* matter, cannot be reveal'd to us as it is in its *own Nature*, any more than the *eſſence* of God can be made *viſible* to our eyes.

But theſe expreſſions teach us thus much with certainty, that there is in the *ſtate* of Chriſt between God and ſinners, ſomething infinitely and inconceivably beneficial to us; and *truly anſwerable* to all that we mean by

mediation, *attonement*, *propitiation*, and *satisfaction*.

And tho' the *real*, *internal manner*, of this mediation and attonement, as it is in its *own nature*, is *incomprehenſible* by us, yet this does not leſſen our knowledge of the *truth* and *certainty* of it, any more than the *incomprehenſibility* of the divine nature, leſſens our *certainty* of its real exiſtence.

And as our idea of God, tho' conſiſting of incomprehenſible perfections, helps us to a real and certain knowledge of the divine nature; and tho' all myſterious, is yet the ſolid foundation of all piety; ſo our idea of Jeſus Chriſt, as our *mediator* and *attonement*, tho' it be mighty incomprehenſible in itſelf, as to its real nature, yet helps us to a *certain* and *real* knowledge of Chriſt, as our *mediator* and *attonement*; and, tho' full of myſtery, is yet full of motives to the higheſt degrees of piety, devotion, love, and gratitude unto God.

All objections therefore, raiſed from any difficulties about the nature of *attonements*, *propitiations*, and *ſatisfactions*, as theſe words are uſed to ſignify in human life, and common language, are vain, and entirely groundleſs.

For all theſe objections proceed upon this ſuppoſition, that *attonement*, or *ſatisfaction*, when attributed to Jeſus Chriſt, ſignify neither *more* nor *leſs*, than when they are uſed as terms in *human laws*, or in *civil* life: Take

Take away this ſuppoſition, and all objections are entirely removed with it.

Thus our author thinks this an unanſwerable difficulty in the preſent caſe, when he asks, How *ſins freely pardon'd, could want any expiation?* Or how, after a full *equivalent paid, and adequate ſatisfaction given, all could be mercy, and pure forgiveneſs?* *

And yet all this difficulty is founded upon this abſurd ſuppoſition, that attonement and ſatisfaction, when attributed to Jeſus Chriſt, ſignify neither more nor leſs, than attonements and ſatisfactions, when ſpoken of in human laws, and human life.

Which is full as abſurd, as to ſuppoſe, that *power* and *life*, when attributed to God, ſignify neither more nor leſs, than when they are ſpoken of men: For there is no reaſon why we ſhould think there is any thing myſterious and incomprehenſible in *power* and *life*, when attributed to God; but what is the ſame reaſon for our thinking, that *attonement* and *ſatisfaction*, when aſcribed to the Son of God, muſt be myſterious and incomprehenſible.

The juſtneſs and certainty of this kind of reaſoning, is, with great perſpicuity and judgment, aſſerted and proved, in a late excellent † *treatiſe*: and I hope the worthy author will not be long, before he gratifies

* *P.* 419.

† *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits, of Human Underſtanding.*

the

the world, in their eager expectation of thoſe *tracts*, which, he has promiſed, ſhould follow it.

To return: I have granted this writer his great principle, *that the relations of things and perſons, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, is the ſole rule of God's actions:* and I have granted it upon this ſuppoſition, that it muſt thence follow, that God muſt act according to his *own nature*; and therefore nothing could be fit for God to do, or worthy of him, but what had the reaſon of its fitneſs in his own nature: and if ſo, then the *rule* of his actions could not fall within our comprehenſion. And conſequently *reaſon alone*, could not be a *competent judge* of God's proceedings; or ſay, what God might, or might not, require of us: and therefore I have, by this means, plainly turned his main argument againſt himſelf, and made it fully confute that doctrine, which he intended to found upon it.

But tho' I have thus far, and for this reaſon, granted the *nature* and *relations* of things and beings, to be the rule of God's actions, becauſe that plainly ſuppoſes, that therefore his *own nature* muſt be the rule of his actions; yet ſince our *author*, and other modern oppoſers of reveal'd doctrines of religion, hold it in another ſenſe, and mean by it, I know not what *eternal*, *immutable* reaſons and relations of things, *independent*

of

of any being, and which are a *common rule and law of God and man*, I entirely declare againſt it, as an erroneous and groundleſs opinion.

Thus, when this writer ſays, *If the relations between things, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, be not the ſole rule of God's actions, muſt he not be an arbitrary being?* As he here means ſome *eternal, immutable relations, independent* of God; ſo, to ſuppoſe, that God cannot be a *wiſe* and *good* being, unleſs ſuch eternal, independent relations, be the *ſole rule* of his actions, is as erroneous, as to affirm, that God cannot be *omniſcient*, unleſs *mathematical demonſtrations* be his *ſole manner* of knowing all things. And it is juſt as reaſonable to fix God's knowledge *ſolely* in mathematical demonſtrations, that we may thence be aſſured of his *infallible knowledge*, as to make I know not what independent relations of things, the *ſole rule* of his actions, that we may thence be aſſur'd, he is not *arbitrary*, but a wiſe and good Being.

And we have as ſtrong reaſons to believe God to be, in the higheſt degree, *wiſe* and *good*, without knowing on *what*, his wiſdom and goodneſs is founded; as we have to believe him to be *omniſcient*, and *eternal*, without knowing on *what*, his *omniſcience* is founded; or to *what*, his *eternity* is owing. And we have the ſame reaſon to hold it a vain and fruitleſs enquiry, to ask, what

obliges

obliges God to be *Wise* and *Good*, as to ask what obliges him to be *Omniscient*, or *Eternal*.

And as it would be absurd to ascribe the *Existence* of God to *any cause*, or found it upon any *independent relations* of things, so it is the same absurdity, to ascribe the infinite wisdom and goodness of God to *any cause*, or found them upon any independent relations of things.

Nor do we any more *lose* the notion, or *lessen* the certainty of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, because we can't say on *what* they are founded, or to *what* they are to be ascrib'd, than we *lose* the notion of God, or render his existence *uncertain*, because it can't be founded on any thing, or ascrib'd to any cause.

And as in our account of the existence of things, we are oblig'd to have recourse to a Being, whose existence must not be ascrib'd to *any cause*, because every thing can't have a cause, no more than every thing can be created, so in our account of *Wisdom* and *Goodness* there is the same necessity of having recourse to an infinite Wisdom and Goodness, that never *began* to be, and that is as different as to its *reason* and *manner* of existence, from all other wisdom and goodness, that have a beginning, as the *existence* of God is *different* from the existence of the creatures.

But if it be neceſſary to hold, that there is an infinite wiſdom and goodneſs that *never began* to be, then it is as neceſſary to affirm, that ſuch wiſdom and goodneſs can no more be *founded* upon the *relations* of things, than the *unbeginning exiſtence* of God can be *founded* upon the exiſtence of things. And to ſeek for any *reaſons* of a wiſdom and goodneſs that could not begin to be, but was always in the *ſame infinite* ſtate, is like ſeeking the cauſe of that which can have no cauſe, or asking *what* it is that *contains* infinity.

But to derive the wiſdom and goodneſs of God from the directions he receives from the *Relations* of things, becauſe our wiſdom and goodneſs is directed by them, is as weak and vain, as to found his *knowledge* upon *ideas*, becauſe our knowledge is *neceſſarily* founded upon them.

When therefore this writer ſaith, *Infinite wiſdom can have no commands, but what are founded on the unalterable reaſon of things* *; he might as juſtly have ſaid, an *infinite Creator* can have no *power* of creating, but what is founded on the *unalterable nature* of creatures.

For the *reaſon* of things, is juſt as unalterable, as the *nature* of creatures. And if the reaſons and relations of things are nothing elſe but their *manner* of exiſtence, or the *ſtate* of their nature, certainly the rela-

* *Page* 247.

tions of things muſt have the ſame *beginning*, and the ſame *alterable* or unalterable nature, as the things from whence they flow. Unleſs it can be ſaid, that a thing may exiſt in *ſuch a manner*, tho' it does not exiſt at all.

Nothing is more certain, than that the relations of things is only the *particular ſtate* of their nature, or *manner* of exiſtence; there can therefore no eternal, and unalterable relations exiſt, but of things that eternally and unalterably exiſt. Unleſs a thing may be ſaid to exiſt eternally and unalterably in ſuch a particular *ſtate* of nature, or *manner* of exiſtence, and yet have no eternal exiſtence.

When therefore he ſays again, *The will of God is always determin'd by the nature and reaſon of things* *: It is the ſame as if he had ſaid, the *omnipotence* of God is always determin'd by the *nature* of *cauſes* and *effects*. For as all cauſes and effects are what they are, and *owe* their *nature* to the omnipotence of God, ſo the relations of things are what they are, and owe their nature to the wiſdom and will of God.

Nor does this dependance of the relations of things on the will of God, deſtroy the nature of relations, or make them doubtful, any more than the exiſtence of things depending on the *power* of God, deſtroys the certainty of their exiſtence, or renders it doubtful,

* *Page* 65.

doubtful. For as God cannot make things to exiſt, and not to exiſt at the ſame time, tho' their exiſtence depends upon his power, ſo neither can he make things to have ſuch relations, and yet not to have ſuch relations at the ſame time, tho' their relations depend upon his will.

So that the aſcribing the relations of things to the will of God, from whence alone they can proceed, brings no uncertainty to thoſe duties or rules of life, which flow from ſuch relations, but leaves the ſtate of nature with all its relations, and the duties which flow from them in the greateſt certainty, ſo long as nature itſelf is continued; and when that either *ceaſes entirely*, or is only *alter'd*, it is not to be wonder'd at, if all its relations ceaſe, or are alter'd with it.

Our author ſays, *Dare any one ſay, that God's laws are not founded on the eternal reaſon of things* * ?

I dare ſay it with the ſame aſſurance, as that his *exiſtence* is not founded on the *eternal exiſtence* of things. And that it is the ſame extravagance to ſay, that God's laws are founded on the *eternal reaſons* of things, as to ſay, that his *power* is founded on the *eternal capacities* of things. For the *capacities* of things have juſt the ſame *ſolidity* and *eternity*, as the relations of things have, and are juſt ſuch *independent realities*, as they are: And are juſt the ſame *proper materials*

* Page 425.

rials to found the omnipotence of God upon, as the relations of things are, to found his infinite wiſdom upon.

And as we can ſay, that the *omnipotence* of God in preſerving and ſupporting the creation, will certainly act *ſuitably* to its ſelf, and *conſiſtent* with that omnipotence which firſt made things be what they are, and put nature into ſuch a ſtate of cauſes and effects as it is in; ſo we can ſay, that the *infinite wiſdom* of God in giving laws to the world, will act *ſuitably* to its ſelf, and *conſiſtent* with that wiſdom which at firſt made the *nature* and *relations* of the rational world be what they are.

But then as the *omnipotence* of God, tho' it acts ſuitably to the laws and ſtate of the creation, and the nature of cauſes and effects, which it firſt ordain'd, yet can't be ſaid to be founded upon the nature of cauſes and effects, becauſe neither cauſes nor effects have any nature, but what they *owe* to omnipotence; ſo the infinite wiſdom of God, tho' in giving laws to the world, it acts *ſuitably* to the natures and relations of rational beings, yet cannot be ſaid to be *founded* upon ſuch relations, becauſe ſuch relations are the *effects* of the divine wiſdom, and owe their exiſtence to it.

And the *reaſon* or *relations* of things ſhew God's *antecedent* wiſdom, and are effects of it, juſt as the nature of *cauſes* and *effects* ſhew his *antecedent* power, and are the effects

fects of it. And as he is infinitely powerful, but not from the *nature* of cauſes and effects; ſo he is infinitely wiſe, but not from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things.

Again, if God is *infinite* wiſdom, then his wiſdom cannot be founded on the relations of things, unleſs things *finite*, and relations that began to be, can be the foundation of that wiſdom which is infinite, and could not begin to be.

And to ask what the infinite wiſdom of God can be founded upon, if it is not founded upon the *natures* and *relations* of things, is the ſame abſurdity, as to ask, How God's wiſdom could be *without* a beginning, if we can't tell *how* it *began?* For if his wiſdom is infinite, it can no more be founded upon any thing, or have any reaſon of its exiſtence, than it can have any thing before it.

Therefore to ask, *what* it is founded upon, when it can have no foundation upon *any thing*, is asking what an *independent* being is dependent upon, or *how* that began, which could have *no* beginning?

And to ask the reaſon or foundation of of *any one* of the divine attributes, is the ſame as asking the reaſon or foundation of them all. And to ſeek for the reaſon or foundation of *all* the divine attributes, is ſeeking for the *cauſe* of God's exiſtence.

And as we don't come at God's exiſtence, till we come to the *end* of *cauſes*, ſo nothing that

that is divine, can be attributed to any cauſe.

Nor is it any more a contradiction to ſay, there is ſomething whoſe nature is without any cauſe or foundation of its exiſtence, than to ſay ſomething exiſts without ever *beginning* to exiſt. For as nothing can have a beginning, but as it proceeds from ſome cauſe; ſo that which can have no beginning, can have no cauſe. If therefore the divine wiſdom ever *began* to be *infinite*, and we could know when that beginning was, we ſhould have ſome pretence to ſearch for *that*, upon which its infinity was *founded*; but if it never could begin to be, then to ſeek for its reaſon, or foundation, is ſeeking for its beginning.

This writer affirms that God's wiſdom and goodneſs muſt be founded on the nature and reaſon of things, otherwiſe it could not be prov'd, that God was not an *arbitrary being*.

Now to ſeek for reaſons to prove that God is not an arbitrary being, that is, a being of the *higheſt freedom* and *independency*, that does every thing according to his *own will* and *pleaſure*, is as vain, as to ſeek for reaſons to prove, that *all things* and *all natures* are not the effect of his *will*. For if every thing beſides God, receiv'd its exiſtence from him; if every thing that exiſts, is the effect of his will, and he can do nothing, but becauſe he *wills* the doing it,

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muſt he not be free and arbitrary in as *high* a *manner*, as he is powerful?

For if God is omnipotent, he muſt act according to his own will. And to ſay, that his *will* muſt be *govern'd* and *directed* by his wiſdom and goodneſs, is the ſame, as to ſay his omnipotence muſt be govern'd by ſomething *more powerful.* For if either his *will*, or his *omnipotence* wanted to be govern'd, there could be nothing to govern them; unleſs we could ſuppoſe, that he had a will *ſuperior* to his will, and a power *ſuperior* to his omnipotence. And tho' *will* and *power* when conſider'd, as *blind*, or *imperfect* faculties in men, may paſs for *humour* and *caprice*, yet as attributes of God, they have the *perfection* of God.

This *writer* ſays, *It is not in our power to love the Deity, whilſt we conſider him to be an arbitrary being, acting out of humour and caprice* *.

But if God's *will* is as *eſſentially* oppoſite to *humour* and *caprice*, as his *omnipotence* is eſſentially oppoſite to *weakneſs* and *inability*; then it is as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that God muſt act according to humour and caprice, becauſe he acts according to his own will, as to ſuppoſe that he muſt act with inability, becauſe he acts by his omnipotence.

And if the will of God, *as ſuch*, is in the higheſt ſtate of perfection, then we have the *higheſt reaſon* to love and adore God, be-

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cauſe he is arbitrary, and acts according to his *own all-perfect will.* And if it be ask'd, what it is that makes the will of God *all-perfect*, it may as well be ask'd, what it is that makes him omnipotent, or makes him to exiſt. For as has been already obſerv'd, we have not found out a God, till we have found a being that has no *cauſe*; ſo we have not found the *will* of God, till we have found a *will*, that has no *mover* or *director*, or *cauſe* of its perfection. For that *will* which never began to be, can no more be any thing, but what it is in its ſelf, than it can begin to be.

And if any of God's attributes *wanted* to be govern'd and directed by the other, it might as well be ſaid, that his infinite goodneſs was govern'd by his *will*, as that his will was govern'd by his goodneſs, becauſe he cannot be good againſt his will.

That which makes people imagine, that *will alone* is not ſo adorable, is becauſe they conſider it as a blind imperfect faculty that wants to be directed. But what has ſuch a will as this to do with the *will* of God?

For if the will of God is as *perfect* a *will*, as his omniſcience is a *perfect knowledge*, then we are as ſure, that the *will* of God can't want any direction, or *will* any thing amiſs, as we are, that his omniſcience can't need any information, or fall into any miſtake. And if the *will* of God wanted any direction or government, it is impoſſible it ſhould have it, for having no ſuperior, it could

could only be ſo govern'd, becauſe it *will'd* it, and therefore muſt be always under its own government.

All the perfection therefore that can be aſcrib'd to God, muſt be aſcrib'd to his *will*, not as if it was the production of his will, (for nothing in God is produc'd) but as eternally, eſſentially, and infinitely inherent in it.

And as God's will has thus all the perfection of the divine nature, and has no rule, or reaſon, or motive to any goodneſs, that comes from it, but its own *nature* and *ſtate* in God; ſo this great will is the only law of all creatures, and they are all to obey and conform to it, for this reaſon, becauſe it is the will of God.

Nothing has a *ſufficient moral* reaſon, or fitneſs to be done, but becauſe it is the will of God that it ſhould be done.

It may be ask'd, Is there then no *reaſon* or *nature* of things? Yes; as certainly as there are things. But the nature and reaſon of things, conſidered *independently* of the divine will, or *without* it, have no more *obligation* in them, than a *divine worſhip* conſider'd independently of, and without any regard to the *exiſtence* of God. For the *will* of God is as abſolutely neceſſary to found all *moral obligation* upon, as the exiſtence of God is neceſſary to be the foundation of religious worſhip. And the fitneſs of *moral obligations*, without the *will* of God, is only

like the fitneſs of a *religious* worſhip without the *exiſtence* of God.

And it is as juſt to ſay, that he deſtroys the *reaſon* of religion and piety, who founds it upon the nature and exiſtence of God, as to ſay, he ſaps the foundation of moral obligations, who founds them upon the will of God. And as religion can't be juſtly or ſolidly defended, but by ſhewing its connexion with, and dependance upon God's exiſtence; ſo neither can moral obligations be aſſerted with ſtrength and reaſon, but by ſhewing them to be the will of God.

It may again be asked, Can God make that fit in *its ſelf*, which is in *its ſelf abſolutely* unfit to be done?

This queſtion conſiſts of improper terms. For God's will no more makes actions to be fit *in themſelves*, than it makes *things* to exiſt *in*, *or of themſelves*. No things, nor any actions have any *abſolute* fitneſs, and in *themſelves*.

A *gift*, a *blow*, the making a *wound*, or *ſhedding* of *blood*, conſider'd in themſelves, have no *abſolute* fitneſs, but are fit or unfit according to any variety of accidental circumſtances.

When therefore God by his will makes any thing fit to be done, he does not make the thing fit in *its ſelf*, which is juſt in the *ſame ſtate* conſider'd in *its ſelf*, that it was before, but it becomes fit for the perſon to do it, becauſe he can only be happy, or do that which

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is fit for him to do, by doing the will of God.

For inſtance, the *bare eating* a fruit, conſider'd in *its ſelf*, is neither fit nor unfit. If a fruit is appointed by God for our food and nouriſhment, then it is as fit to eat it, as to preſerve our lives. If a fruit is poiſonous, then it is as unfit to eat it, as to commit ſelf-murder. If eating of a fruit is prohibited by an expreſs order of God, then it is as unfit to eat it, as to eat our own damnation.

But in none of theſe inſtances is the eating or not eating, conſider'd in *its ſelf*, *fit* or *unfit*; but has all its fitneſs, or unfitneſs, from ſuch circumſtances, as are entirely owing to the will of God.

Suppoſing therefore God to require a perſon to do ſomething, which according to his preſent circumſtances, *without* that command, he ought not to do, God does not make that which is *abſolutely* unfit in *it ſelf*, fit to be done; but only adds *new circumſtances* to an action, that is neither fit, nor unfit, moral, nor immoral in *it ſelf*, but *becauſe* of its circumſtances.

To inſtance in the caſe of *Abraham* requir'd to ſacrifice his ſon. The killing of a man is neither good nor bad, conſider'd *abſolutely* in *its ſelf*. It was unlawful for *Abraham* to kill his ſon, becauſe of the *circumſtances* he was in with regard to his ſon. But when the divine command was given,

Abraham was in a *new ſtate*, the action had *new circumſtances*, and then it was as lawful for *Abraham* to kill his ſon, as it was lawful for God to require any man's life, either by *ſickneſs*, or any *other means* he ſhould pleaſe to appoint.

And it had been as unlawful for *Abraham* to have diſobey'd God in this extraordinary command, as to have curs'd God at any *ordinary calamity* of providence.

Again, it is objected, If *there is nothing right or wrong, good or bad, antecedently and independently of the will of God, there can then be no reaſon, why God ſhould will, or command one thing, rather than another.*

It is anſwered, *firſt*, That all goodneſs, and all poſſible perfection, is as *eternal* as God, and as eſſential to him as his exiſtence. And to ſay, that they are either *antecedent* or *conſequent*, *dependent* or *independent* of his will, would be equally abſurd. To ask therefore whether there is not ſomething right and wrong, antecedent to the will of God, to render his will *capable* of being right, is as abſurd, as to ask for ſome antecedent cauſe of his exiſtence, that he may be prov'd to exiſt neceſſarily. And to ask, how God can be good if there is not ſomething good independently of him, is asking how he can be infinite, if there be not ſomething infinite independently of him. And to ſeek for any other *ſource* or *reaſon* of the divine goodneſs beſides the divine

vine nature, is like ſeeking for ſome external cauſe and help of the divine omnipotence.

The goodneſs and wiſdom therefore, by which God is wiſe and good, and to which all his works of wiſdom and goodneſs are owing, are neither *antecedent*, nor *conſequent* to his will.

Secondly, Nothing is more certain, than that all *moral obligations* and *duties* of creatures towards one another, *began* with the exiſtence of moral creatures. This is as certain, as that all *phiſical relations*, and corporeal qualities and effects *began* with the exiſtence of bodies.

As therefore nothing has the nature of a cauſe or effect, nothing has any quality of any kind in bodies, but what is entirely owing to matter ſo created and conſtituted by the *will* of God; ſo it is equally certain that no actions have any *moral qualities*, but what are wholly owing to that ſtate and nature in which they are created by the will of God.

Moral obligations therefore of creatures have the ſame *origin*, and the *ſame reaſon*, that natural qualities and effects have in the corporeal world, *viz.* the ſole will of God. And as in a different ſtate of matter, bodies would have had different qualities and effects; ſo in a different ſtate of rational beings, there would be different moral obligations, and nothing could be right

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or good in their behaviour, but what began then to be right and good, becauſe they then began to exiſt in ſuch a ſtate and condition of life. And as their ſtate and condition could have no other cauſe or reaſon of its exiſtence, but the ſole will of God, ſo the cauſe and reaſon of right and wrong in ſuch a ſtate, muſt be equally owing to the will of God.

The pretended *abſolute independent fitneſſes*, or *unfitneſſes* of actions therefore *in themſelves*, are vain *abſtractions*, and philoſophical *jargon*, ſerving no ends of morality, but only helping people to wrangle and diſpute away that ſincere obedience to God, which is their only happineſs. But to make theſe imaginary *abſolute fitneſſes* the *common law* both of God and man, is ſtill more extravagant. For if the *circumſtances* of actions give them their *moral nature*, ſurely God muſt firſt be in our circumſtances, before that which is a law to us, can be the ſame law to him.

And if a father may require that of a ſon, which his ſon, becauſe of his *different ſtate*, cannot require of his brother; ſurely that which God may require of us, may be as different from that, which a father may require of a ſon, as God is different from a father.

Thus this writer ſpeaking of the law founded on abſolute fitneſſes, ſays, *it is a law by which God governs his own actions, and*

and expects that all the rational world ſhould govern theirs *. And leaſt you ſhould think that God is not in the ſame ſtate of neceſſary ſubjection and obedience to this law, he farther adds, *that God can't diſpence, either with his creatures, or himſelf, for not obſerving it* †.

Now to ſay, that the *reaſon* of things is the ſame law to God that it is to us, is ſaying that God is in the *ſame ſtate* with *regard* to the nature of things, as we are. For as things are a law to us, becauſe we are in *ſuch* a ſtate; if they are the *ſame law* to God, it muſt be becauſe God is in the ſame ſtate that we are.

Again, if God is as much under a law as we are, then he is as much under authority; for law can no more be without authority, than without a law-giver. And if God and we are under the *ſame law*, we muſt be under the *ſame authority*.

But as God cannot be under any law in common with us, his creatures, any more than he can be of the ſame rank or order with us; ſo neither can he be under any law at all, any more than he can be under any authority at all.

For that which is the *rule*, or *reaſon* of God's actions, is no more different from his own will, than his power is different from his will.

And

* *Page* 59. † *Page* 189.

And tho' God is not to be look'd upon as an *arbitrary being*, in the ſenſe of this author, who will not diſtinguiſh arbitrary from *humour* and *caprice*; yet in a better and only true ſenſe of the word, when apply'd to God, he muſt be affirm'd to be an arbitrary being, that acts only from himſelf, from his *own will*, and according to his *own pleaſure*.

And we have no more reaſon to be afraid to be left to a God without a law, than to a God that had no beginning, or to be left to his will and pleaſure, than to be left under the protection and care of a being, that is all love, and mercy, and goodneſs. For as the exiſtence of God, as ſuch, neceſſarily implies the exiſtence of all perfection; ſo the will of God, as ſuch, neceſſarily implies the *willing* every thing, that *all perfection* can will.

And as the exiſtence of God, becauſe it contains all perfection, cannot for that reaſon have any external cauſe; ſo the will of God, becauſe it is *all perfection*, cannot, for that reaſon, have any external *rule* or *direction*. But his own will is wiſdom, and his wiſdom is his will. His goodneſs is arbitrary, and his arbitrarineſs is goodneſs.

To bring God therefore into a ſtate of moral obligation and ſubjection to any external *law* or *rule*, as we are, has all the abſurdity of ſuppoſing him to be a finite, dependent,

dependent, temporary, imperfect, improveable, governable being as we are.

But this writer does not only thus bring God into this ſtate of law and obligation with us, but makes farther advances in the ſame kind of errors.

Hence, ſays he, *we may contemplate the great dignity of our rational nature, ſince our reaſon for* kind, *tho' not for degree, is of the* ſame nature *with* that of God's *.

Here you ſee *our reaſon*, that is, our *faculty* of reaſoning, for reaſon can't be call'd *ours* in any other reſpect, has no other difference from reaſon as it is in God, but that of degree. But what greater abſurdity can a man fall into, than to ſuppoſe, that a being whoſe exiſtence had a beginning but a few years ago, differs only in degree from that which could not *poſſibly* have a beginning; or that a *dependent* and *independent* being ſhould not be different in *kind*, but *only* in degree. For if nothing that had a beginning, can be without a beginning; if nothing that is dependent can be independent, then no faculties or powers of dependent beings that began to be, can be of the *ſame kind* with the powers of that independent being, that could not begin to be.

For to ſay, that the faculties of a dependent and independent being, may be of the ſame kind, is as flat a contradiction, as to ſay, the ſame kind of thing may be depen-

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dent, and independent, as it is the ſame kind of thing.

How extravagant would he be, who ſhould affirm, *exiſtence*, *life*, *happineſs*, and *power*, to be of the ſame *kind* and *nature* in us, as they are in God, and only to differ in degree?

And yet it would be more extravagant to ſuppoſe, that tho' God cannot *poſſibly* have our *kind* of *exiſtence*, *life*, *happineſs*, and *power*, yet he muſt have *our kind* of reaſon.

Reaſon belongs to God and man, juſt as *power*, *exiſtence*, *life* and *happineſs* belong to God and man. And he that can from happineſs being common to God and man, prove our happineſs to be of the *ſame kind* and nature with God's, may alſo prove reaſon in God and man to be of the ſame kind.

This writer indeed ſays, *Our happineſs is limited*, becauſe *our reaſon is ſo*, and that God has *unlimited happineſs*, becauſe *he alone has unlimited reaſon.* *

But if that which is *neceſſarily limited*, is certainly different from that which is *neceſſarily unlimited*, then we have proof enough from this very argument, that a reaſon *neceſſarily* limited, can't be of the *ſame kind* with that reaſon, which is *neceſſarily* unlimited. Unleſs it can be ſaid, that neceſſary and unneceſſary, limited and unlimited, finite and infinite, beginning and unbeginning,

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ning, have no contrariety in *kind*, but only differ, as a *ſhort* line differs from a *long* one.

The truth of the matter is this; reaſon is in God and man, as power is in God and man. And as the divine power has ſome degree of likeneſs to human power, yet with an *infinite* difference from it; ſo that perfection which we call *reaſon* in God, has ſome degree of likeneſs to reaſon as it is in man, yet is *infinitely* and beyond all conception different from it.

Nor can any one ſhew, that we enjoy reaſon in a *higher degree* in reſpect of God, than we enjoy power; or that the *manner*, or *light* of our reaſon, bears any greater likeneſs to the light and knowledge of God, than the *manner* and *extent* of our power bears to the omnipotence of God.

And as our enjoyment of power is ſo limited, ſo imperfect, ſo ſuperficial, as to be ſcarce ſufficient to tell us, what power is, much leſs what omnipotence is; ſo our ſhare of reaſon is ſo ſmall, and we enjoy it in ſo imperfect a manner, that we can ſcarce think or talk intelligibly of it, or ſo much as define our own faculties of reaſoning.

And if this writer, having rejected the light of ſcripture, could but have known thus much by the ſole light of reaſon, That the Creator and the creature can't be beings of the ſame *kind*, and *nature*, he might have eſcaped the abſurdity of affirming the

reaſon of God and man to be of the *ſame kind and nature.*

An *ingenious gentleman*, in a remark upon the learned author of the *Procedure of human underſtanding*, ſeems not to have kept clear of this error: Speaking of the likeneſs of the divine attributes to thoſe qualities and perfections which are in our ſelves, he ſays, *They muſt be partly the ſame, and partly different*, or alike or unlike in different reſpects, *viz. alike in perfection, and unlike in defect or imperfection; or the ſame in nature or eſſence, and different in degree, or the manner of exiſtence* *.

1. Let it be obſerv'd, that this compariſon is made betwixt the attributes of God as *inherent* in the divine nature, and the qualities and faculties as *inherent* in human nature; and of theſe, it is affirm'd, that they are thus of the *ſame nature* or *eſſence*, and *partly* the *ſame*, and *partly different.*

2. All the attributes inherent in the divine nature, are *neceſſary*, *eternal*, *infinite*, *immutable*, *independent*, and *all perfect.* All the qualities and faculties inherent in human nature are in a direct *contrary ſtate.* If therefore it can't be ſaid, that finite and infinite, neceſſary and contingent, temporary and eternal, are *partly the ſame*, and *partly different*, neither can it be ſaid of any ſuppos'd finite mutable quality, that it is *partly*

* *Tranſlator of A. B.* King's *Eſſay on the Orig. of Evil*, p. 69.

partly the *ſame*, and *partly different* from that which is infinite, eternal, and immutable. But they muſt be as different in their nature, as finite and mutable is from infinite and immutable.

3. He ſays, theſe attributes of God, and qualities of men, *are alike in perfection, unlike in defect or imperfection.* Now that which makes the perfection of the divine attributes, is their *incommunicableneſs*, their *eternity*, *neceſſary* exiſtence, *immutability*, *infinity* and *independency*: The knowledge, power, and will of God, are perfect becauſe they are in this ſtate.

If therefore, as this gentleman ſays, the divine attributes, and human qualities and faculties are *alike in perfection*, they muſt be alike in *eternity*, *neceſſary exiſtence*, *infinity*, &c. becauſe theſe things conſtitute the perfection of the divine attributes.

If therefore power in man and power in God are *alike in perfection*, but unlike in defect and imperfection, they muſt be alike in omnipotence, but unlike in defect of power. If I miſtake this gentleman's meaning, I am ſorry for it, but I don't know how to underſtand his words in any other ſenſe. For if the inherent attributes of God, and the faculties of men, are *alike in perfection*, and *unlike in defect and imperfection*, and this is their only difference, as he expreſly ſays; then I think it muſt follow, that underſtanding, as an inherent

rent attribute of God, and the underſtanding of men, muſt be alike in infinite knowledge, and unlike in the defect of knowledge. And ſo with all the other attributes of God and faculties of man, they muſt agree and diſagree in the ſame manner, which ſeems to be impoſſible.

4. To ſay two things or attributes are alike in perfection, and unlike in imperfection, ſeems to be inconſiſtent. For nothing can be like in perfection, unleſs it be alike in imperfection. Unleſs a thing may be like another in *ſtrength*, but not like it in the *want* of ſtrength.

This gentleman ſays, They are the *ſame in nature* or *eſſence, and different in* degree, *or the* manner *of their exiſtence.*

Therefore, *power*, *underſtanding*, and *will* in God, are the *ſame* in *nature* and *eſſence*, with power, underſtanding, and will in man, and different in degree or manner of exiſtence.

Now that which differs only in degree, can only differ in a *certain degree.* But finite and infinite, mutable and immutable, can't be ſaid to differ only in a certain degree.

To ſay that they differ only in *degree*, or *manner of exiſtence*, ſuppoſes, that *degree* or *manner of exiſtence*, ſignify the ſame thing. Whereas they are exceedingly different. It may be proper enough to ſay, that mutable and immutable, eternal and temporary, finite

finite and infinite, differ only in their *manner* of exiſtence, but it can't be ſaid they differ *only* in *degree.*

The exiſtence of God differs from the exiſtence of man in the *manner* of its exiſtence, but not in the degree of exiſtence.

This gentleman grants, that the attributes inherent in the divine nature, muſt differ from the qualities and faculties of man in *their manner* of exiſtence, but yet muſt be the ſame in *nature* and *eſſence*; but if they muſt differ *infinitely*, and therefore *unmeaſurably* and *inconceiveably* in their *manner* of exiſtence; and if their manner of exiſtence muſt have all that difference there is between finite and infinite, mutable and immutable, eternal and not eternal; then it can ſignify little, whether you ſay, they are different in their *nature* and *eſſence*, or only different in their *manner* of exiſtence.

For who can tell the nature and eſſence of any thing, any farther than he knows the *manner* of its exiſtence? Or why may we not as well diſtinguiſh the *nature* of a thing from its *eſſence*, as from the whole manner of exiſtence?

Even in the moſt common objects of our ſenſes, if we talk of any other nature or eſſence of things, than their *manner* of exiſtence, we are loſt in ſounds without any meaning; but if we carry ſuch diſtinctions to the divine attributes, and make their nature

ture and eſſence ſo entirely diſtinct from their manner of exiſtence, that *that* which we affirm of the one, muſt be deny'd of the other; we ſeem to be in their ſtate, who affirm that of the *eſſence*, which they deny of the *nature* of God.

But this gentleman's diſtinction not only ſuppoſes this *real difference* between the *nature* of a thing, and its *manner* of exiſtence, but it ſuppoſes they are *abſolutely independent* of one another, and without any mutual relation. That is, it ſuppoſes, that a thing has not ſuch a *manner* of exiſtence, becauſe it is of ſuch a *nature*; nor is of ſuch a nature, becauſe it is of ſuch a manner of exiſtence.

For if the manner of exiſtence of things had *any* dependance upon their nature, or things exiſted in ſuch a manner, becauſe they had ſuch a nature, then it would follow, that every difference in the manner of exiſtence, muſt ariſe from a difference in the nature of the thing. And conſequently thoſe things which differ *infinitely*, *immutably*, *eternally*, in their manner of exiſtence, muſt accordingly differ in their *nature*. And therefore to affirm that things may and muſt be thus *infinitely* different in *their manner* of exiſtence, without *any* difference in their nature, is affirming, that things don't exiſt in ſuch a manner, becauſe they have ſuch a nature, that is, that there is no relation between the nature of things and their manner

ner of exiſtence, but that they are in a ſtate of *abſolute independence* on one another.

The ſhort of the matter is this. If things exiſt in *ſuch* a manner becauſe they have *ſuch* a nature, then an infinite difference in the manner of exiſtence muſt imply ſome infinitely great difference in the *nature* of the things; and if ſo, then the foundation on which the learned author of the *Procedure of human underſtanding* grounds his *analogy*, is ſufficiently made good.

And this gentleman can't ſhew this foundation to be falſe and groundleſs, but by ſhewing, that the *nature* of every thing is *abſolutely* independent of the *manner* of its exiſtence, and has no more influence upon it, than the nature of any thing elſe. That is, he muſt ſhew, that the *manner* of *underſtanding*, *will*, or *power* in God or man, is not at all owing to the *nature* of underſtanding, will, or power in God, or man. The foundation therefore of that learned author's *analogy* ſtands ſure, if there be any certainty, that the *manner* of the exiſtence of things has any relation to, or dependence upon their natures.

6. This gentleman asks, If *the divine attributes be* toto genere, *diſtinct and different from thoſe qualities and perfections, which we eſteem perfections in our ſelves; how we ſhall diſcover which kind of qualities God prefers before the contrary? How can we be certain, that theſe in particular are agreeable to him?*

Or how we ſhall hope or endeavour to make our ſelves like him ?*

Now theſe queſtions have the ſame difficulty, upon this writer's own account of the divine attributes, which, he ſays, in *the manner* of *their exiſtence* are different from the qualities of men. For if they differ *infinitely* and *immutably* in their *manner* of exiſtence, are we not as much at a loſs to know what they are, and as unable to imitate that which ſtands at an *infinite* and *immutable* diſtance from us; as if we had ſaid, that it is different in *nature* from our qualities. And muſt not all thoſe be neceſſarily at this loſs, who can't diſtinguiſh betwixt the nature of an *infinite* attribute, and its *manner* of exiſtence? And they who can thus diſtinguiſh, can be no clearer in this matter, than they are certain and clear in the reality of that diſtinction.

But the true anſwer to all theſe difficulties is very obvious, as I ſhall ſhew, by inſtancing in ſeveral of the divine attributes, notwithſtanding their being different in nature from any human qualities or faculties.

Let us ſuppoſe, the creation of all things out of nothing to be an *effect* of divine power, and the changing the *ſhape* of a *piece* of wood, to be an *effect* of human power. I ask whether theſe effects are *toto genere* diſtinct, and different in their *nature?*

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* *Page* 68.

Can any one poſſibly ſay, that theſe effects are not different in *nature and kind?* And yet can it be ſaid that they have *no* likeneſs? Are not they alike in *this*, as they are *effects?* Don't we know with the ſame certainty that they are both effects?

Let us now transfer this reaſoning to the *powers* that produce theſe effects. If the nature of cauſes can be at all known by their effects, is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe, theſe cauſes muſt be as different in their *natures*, as their effects are? And ſuppoſing theſe two powers to be thus different in *their nature*, does it follow that there is therefore *no likeneſs* betwixt them? Do they not both *agree* in *this*, that they produce effects? Are we not therefore as *certain* of divine power, and know as well what we mean by it, as when we ſpeak of human power?

Has any one loſt his reaſons for fearing and adoring the divine power, becauſe it can only be compar'd to human power, as infinite may be compar'd to finite? Has he nothing to *ground* his fear upon, becauſe this power has ſuch a *reality*, as nothing can repreſent to him, as it is in its own nature? Has he nothing but an empty notion of the divine power, becauſe it is as different in its nature from human power, as the *creation* of the world is wholly different from the *changing* the *ſhape* of a piece of wood?

Now ſuppoſing the wiſdom and goodneſs of God have only ſuch *analogy* or *likeneſs*

to human wiſdom and goodneſs, as the omnipotence of God has to human power, ſuppoſing them to be as different in their *real nature* from thoſe perfections in us, as omnipotence is different in its real nature from human power. Have we by this any way *loſt* our notions of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs? Have we not thereby the higheſt aſſurance of the *reality* of their exiſtence? And can we have a more diſtinct and affecting notion of them, than to believe them to be as like and unlike to human wiſdom and goodneſs, as omnipotence is like and unlike to human power.

For as the omnipotence of God is therefore of a different *nature* from human power, not becauſe it is different from *power*, but becauſe it has ſuch an *infinite reality* and *perfection* of power, as is incommunicable to us; ſo the wiſdom and goodneſs of God are different in *nature* from ours, not becauſe they are different from *wiſdom* and *goodneſs*, but becauſe they have ſuch an *infinite reality* and *perfection* of wiſdom and goodneſs, as cannot be communicated to us.

And as our holding the omnipotence of God to be of a *tranſcendently* high and *different nature* from human power, inſtead of deſtroying or confounding our notion of it, helps us to a fuller and better belief of it, and gives us the greateſt reaſons to fear and adore it; ſo our holding the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God to be of a *tranſcendent-*

ly

ly high and *different nature* from ours, is ſo far from weakening, or confounding our notions of them, that it helps us to a better, fuller, and more affecting belief of them, and furniſhes us with the ſtrongeſt motives to admire and reverence them.

CHAP. II.

Shewing from the ſtate *and* relation *between God and man, that human reaſon cannot poſſibly be a competent judge of the* fitneſs *and* reaſonableneſs *of God's proceedings with mankind, either as to the* time, *or* matter, *or* manner *of any external revelation.*

AS our author has laid it down as an undeniable rule of God's actions, that he muſt, if he be a wiſe and good being, act according to the relation he ſtands in towards his creatures; ſo I proceed upon this principle, to prove the incapacity of *human reaſon*, to judge *truly* of God's proceedings in regard to divine revelation.

For

For if the fitneſs of actions *reſults from the nature and relations* of beings, then the *fitneſs* of God's actions, as he is an *omniſcient creator* and *governor*, to whom every thing is *eternally foreknown*, over beings endu'd with *our freedom of will*, muſt be to us very incomprehenſible.

We are not ſo much as capable of comprehending by our own reaſon the *poſſibility* of this relation, or how the foreknowledge of God can conſiſt with the free agency of creatures. We know that God foreknows all things, with the ſame certainty as we know there is a God. And if *ſelf-conſciouſneſs* is an infallible proof of our own exiſtence, it proves with the ſame certainty the freedom of our will. And hence it is, that we have a full aſſurance of the conſiſtency of God's fore-knowledge with freedom of will.

Now this *incomprehenſible* relation between an *eternally fore-knowing creator* and *governor*, and his free creatures, is the *relation* from whence ariſes the *fitneſs* of God's providence over us. But if the *relation* it ſelf is incomprehenſible, then thoſe actions that have their *fitneſs* from it, muſt ſurely be incomprehenſible. Nothing can be fit for God to do, either in *creation* or *Providence*, but what has its fitneſs founded in his own *fore-knowledge* of every thing that would follow, from *every kind* of creation, and *every manner* of providence: But if nothing

thing can be fit, but becauſe it is according to *this fore-knowledge* of *every thing* that would follow, from *every kind* of creation, and *every manner* of providence; then we have the utmoſt certainty, that the *fitneſs* of God's actions as a *fore-knowing Creator*, and *governor* of free agents, muſt be founded upon *reaſons*, that we cannot *poſſibly* know any thing of.

And a *child* that has but juſt learn'd to ſpeak, is as well qualify'd to ſtate the fitneſs of the laws of *matter* and *motion* by which the whole *vegetable* world is preſerv'd, as the wiſeſt of men is qualify'd to comprehend, or ſtate the fitneſs of the methods, or proceedings, which a *fore-knowing providence* obſerves over free agents. For every reaſon on which the fitneſs of ſuch a providence is founded, is not only *unknown* to us, but by a neceſſity of nature *impoſſible* to be known by us.

For if the *fitneſs* of God's acting in this, or that manner, is founded in his *fore-knowledge* of every thing that would *happen*, from *every poſſible way* of acting, *then* it is juſt as abſolutely impoſſible for us to know the reaſons, on which the fitneſs of his actions are founded, as it is impoſſible for us to be omniſcient.

What human reaſon can tell, what kind of beings it is *fit* and *reaſonable* for God to create, on the account of his own *eternal fore-knowledge?* And yet this is as poſſible,

as

as for the ſame reaſon to tell, how God ought to govern beings already created, on the account of his own eternal fore-knowledge; and yet God can neither *create*, nor *govern* his creatures, as it is *fit* and *reaſonable* he ſhould, unleſs he creates and governs them in *this* or *that* manner, on the *account* of his own fore-knowledge. And therefore if he acts *like* himſelf, and *worthy* of his own nature, the fitneſs of his proceedings muſt for this very reaſon, *becauſe* they are fit, be vaſtly above our comprehenſion.

Who can tell what *different kinds* of rational creatures, diſtinguiſh'd by variety of natures, and faculties, it is fit and reaſonable for God to create, becauſe he *eternally foreſaw* what would be the *effect* of ſuch different creations? Who can explain the *fitneſs* of that vaſt *variety* there is amongſt rational creatures of the *ſame ſpecies*, in their rational faculties, or ſhew that all their different faculties ought to be as they are? And yet the *fitneſs* of this providence has its *certain reaſon* in the divine fore-knowledge, and it could not be fit, but becauſe of it.

Who can tell what *degree* of reaſon rational creatures ought to enjoy, *becauſe* they are rational; or what degrees of *new* and *reveal'd* knowledge it is fit and reaſonable for God to give, or not give them, becauſe they ſeem, or ſeem not to themſelves to want it? Are diſpos'd, or not diſpos'd to receive

receive it? For as mankind cannot tell why it was *fit* and *reaſonable* for God to create them of ſuch a *kind*, and *degree*, as they are of; ſo neither can they tell how God ought, or ought not to add to their natural knowledge, and make them as *differently accountable* for the uſe of reveal'd rules of life, as for the uſe of their natural faculties.

And as the reaſon why God created them of *ſuch* a *kind*, and with *ſuch faculties*, was becauſe of his own fore-knowledge of the *effects* of ſuch a creation; ſo if ever he does reveal to them any *ſupernatural* knowledge, both the doing it, the *time*, and *matter* and *manner* of it muſt have its *fitneſs* in his own *eternal fore-knowledge* of the effects of ſuch a revelation.

The reaſons therefore on which the *fitneſs* of this or that revelation, *why* or *when*, of *what matter*, in *what manner*, and to *whom* it is to be made, muſt, from the nature and reaſon of things, be as unſearchable by us, as the reaſons of *this* or *that* creation of rational beings, at ſuch a *time*, of ſuch a *kind*, in ſuch a *manner*, and in ſuch a *ſtate*.

This may help us to an eaſy ſolution of thoſe unreaſonable queſtions which this writer puts in this manner.

If the deſign of God in communicating any thing of himſelf to men was their happineſs, would not that deſign have oblig'd him, who at all times alike deſires their happineſs, to

have at all times alike communicated it to them? If God always acts for the good of his creatures, what reason can be assign'd, why he should not from the beginning have discover'd such things as make for their good, but defer the doing it till the time of Tiberius? *Since the sooner this was done, the greater would his goodness appear* *.

And again, *How is it consistent with the notion of God's being universally benevolent, not to have reveal'd it to all his children, when all had equal need of it? Was it not as easy for him to have communicated it to all nations, as to any one nation or person? Or in all languages, as in one* †.

Now all this is fully answer'd by our author's own great and fundamental principle.

For if the relations between things and persons, and the fitness resulting from thence, be the sole rule of God's actions ‖, as he expressly affirms; then the *sole rule* or reason of God's revealing any thing to any man, or men, at any time, must have its *fitness resulting* from the divine fore-knowledge of the effects of *such* a revelation, at *such* a time, and to *such* persons. If God does not act thus, he does not act according to the *relation* betwixt a *fore-knowing Creator*, and his free creatures. But if he does act according to a *fitness resulting* from this *relation*, and makes or does not make revelations,

* *Page* 393. † *Page* 196. ‖ *Page* 28.

tions, according to his own fore-knowledge of the fitneſs of times, and perſons for them; then to ask how a God, *always equally* good, can make a revelation at *any* time, and not make the *ſame* at *all* times, is as abſurd as to ask, how a God, always equally good, can reveal that at one time, becauſe it is a *proper* time for it, and not reveal it at every other time, tho' every other time is *improper* for it?

God's goodneſs directed by his own fore-knowledge of the *fitneſs* of times, and of the *ſtate* and *actions* of free agents, deferr'd a certain revelation to the time of *Tiberius*, becauſe he *foreſaw* it would then be an act of the *greateſt* goodneſs, and have its *beſt effects* upon the world: To ask therefore, *what reaſon can be aſſign'd*, why ſo good and beneficial a revelation was not *ſooner*, or even from the *beginning* made to the world, is asking, *What reaſon can be aſſign'd*, why God is good, and intends the *greateſt* good by what does, or ſtays for the doing any thing, till ſuch time as makes it a greater good than if he had done it ſooner; it is asking, why God ſhould act according to his *own fore-knowledge* of the *ſtate* and *actions* of *free agents*, and order all things according to a fitneſs reſulting from ſuch a fore-knowledge?

Theſe queſtions ſuppoſe, that if God ſhew'd his *goodneſs* to mankind by a revelation at ſuch time, he muſt be *wanting* in goodneſs before that time, becauſe he did

not make it *ſooner*; whereas if his deferring it till *ſuch* a time, was owing to his *fore-knowledge* of the actions and ſtate of free agents, and of the *effects* of his revelation, and becauſe it would then have its *beſt effects*, then God is prov'd to be *equally* good before he made it; for this very reaſon, becauſe he did not make it before its *proper* time; and he had been wanting in goodneſs, if he had not *deferr'd* it till that time.

Now this appealing to God's fore-knowledge of the ſtate and actions of *free agents*, as the cauſe of all that is particular in the *time* and *manner* of any revelation, and deducing its fitneſs from thence, cannot be ſaid to be *begging the queſtion* in diſpute, but is reſolving it directly according to the *rule* which this writer lays down for God to act by, which is this: That *the relations between things and perſons*, and *the fitneſs reſulting from thence*, *muſt be the ſole rule of God's actions*, *unleſs he be an arbitrary being*.

But if this is the *ſole rule*, then God in giving any revelation muſt act, as the *relation* betwixt a *fore-knowing* Creator and his *free* creatures requires; and his actions muſt have their *fitneſs reſulting* from his fore-knowledge of the *ſtate* and *actions* of free agents. But if this is God's ſole rule, made neceſſary to him from the nature of things, then to ask why *this* or *that* revelation *only* at *ſuch* a time, is to ask why God *only* does that which is *fit* for him to do? And to ask,

ask, why not the ſame revelation at any other time, is asking why God does not do that, which it is *not fit* for him to do?

This writer asks, *How it is conſiſtent with the notion of God's being univerſally benevolent, not to have reveal'd it to all his children, who had equal need of it?* But if they had *equal need* of it, yet if they were not *equally fit* for it, but prepar'd only to have their *guilt* increaſed by it, and ſo be expos'd to a greater damnation by refuſing it; then God's goodneſs to them is very manifeſt, by with-holding ſuch information from them, and reſerving it for thoſe that would be made happier by it.

Judas and *Pontius Pilate*, and the *Jews* that called for our Saviour's crucifixion, had *equal need* of a Saviour with thoſe that believed in him. *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida* wanted the light of the Goſpel as much as thoſe that receiv'd it; but if the reſt of the world had been at that time as much indiſpos'd for the light of the Goſpel, as they were, God's goodneſs had been greater to that age, if he had left them as they were, and reſerv'd the light of the Goſpel till a better age had ſucceeded.

So that this argument founded on the *equal need* of all, or former ages, has no force, unleſs it could be ſhewn, that the ſame revelation made to any of theſe former ages, would have produc'd all thoſe good effects, which God foreſaw would follow from

from its being reſerv'd for ſuch a *particular time* and *ſtate* of things and perſons.

He asks again, *Was it not as eaſy for God to have communicated it to all nations, as to any one nation or perſon? Or in all languages, as in any one?* This argument is built upon the *truth* and *reaſonableneſs* of this ſuppoſition, That God does things becauſe they are *eaſy*, or forbears things becauſe they are *difficult* to be perform'd. For it can be no argument that God ought to have reveal'd ſuch things to *all* nations or perſons, becauſe it was as *eaſy* to him, as to do it to *any one* nation or perſon; unleſs it be ſuppos'd, that the *eaſineſs* of a thing is a reaſon why God does it, and the difficulty of a thing a reaſon why he does not do it. But if this ſuppoſition be very abſurd, then the argument founded upon it muſt be liable to the ſame charge.

It is as eaſy to God to make all men conformable to his will, as to make *trees* and *plants* grow according to his pleaſure; but tho' it is as eaſy, yet it is not as *fit* and *reaſonable* for God to do all by *power* in the rational world, as he does all by power in the vegetable. It is as eaſy for God to deſtroy all ſinful natures, as to preſerve them in being; and if he does one rather than the other, it is not becauſe one is *eaſier* than the other, but becauſe the perfections of his own nature move him to it.

But if God does things not becauſe they are eaſy, but becauſe they are infinitely good and fit to be done, and founded in the *relation* of a fore-knowing Creator to his free creatures; then the reaſon why God has afforded different revelations to different ages and perſons is this, That his *manner* of revealing every thing might be *worthy* of his own *fore-knowledge* of the effects of it, and that every thing that is particular in the *time* or *manner* of any revelation, might have its *fitneſs reſulting* from the *relation* betwixt a good God and his creatures, whoſe *changing* ſtate, *different* conduct, *tempers* and *actions* are all eternally fore-known by him.

If it ſhould here be ſaid, that this *writer* only means, that it is as *poſſible* for God to make the ſame revelation have the *ſame* effects, and produce *as much* good in one age as in another;

This is only ſaying, It is as *poſſible* for God to *deſtroy* the difference of times and ſtates, to *over-rule* the nature of things, and turn all mankind into *mere machines*, as it is to govern and preſide over them according to their natures. For if the natures of things are not to be deſtroy'd; if the *nature*, and *ſtate*, and *tempers* of men, and the *freedom* of their wills are to be ſuffer'd to act according to themſelves; then to ſay, it is as poſſible for God to make the ſame revelation to have the ſame effect in one

age

age as in another, is as abſurd as to ſay, it is as poſſible for him to make the *ſame heat* of the *Sun* have the ſame effects upon any one place of the earth, that it has upon another, upon *rocks* and *barren ſands*, as it has upon a fertile ſoil, without altering the nature of *rocks* and *ſands*.

Again, it is objected, that a divine revelation muſt either be the effect of *juſtice*, or elſe of *mercy* and *free goodneſs*; but in either of theſe caſes it ought to be *univerſal*; for juſtice muſt be done to all. But if it is the effect of *mercy* and *free goodneſs*, this writer asks, *How a being can be denominated merciful and good, who is ſo only to a few, but cruel and unmerciful to the reſt* * ?

It is anſwer'd, That there is neither *juſtice* in God without mercy, nor *mercy* without juſtice; and to aſcribe a *revelation* to either of them ſeparately, in *contradiſtinction* to the other, has no more truth or reaſon in it, than to aſcribe the *creation* ſeparately either to the *Wiſdom*, or *Power* of God, in contradiſtinction to the other.

Secondly, A divine revelation is not owing to the *juſtice* or *free goodneſs* of God, either *ſeparately* or *jointly* conſider'd; but to the goodneſs, mercy, and juſtice of God, *govern'd* and *directed* by his eternal fore-knowledge of all the effects of every revelation, at any, or all times.

God

* Page 401.

God ordains a revelation in this or that manner, time and place; not becauſe it is a *juſtice* that he can't refuſe, not becauſe it is matter of *favour* or *free* goodneſs, and therefore may be given in any manner at pleaſure; but becauſe he has the whole *duration* of human things, the whole *race* of mankind, the whole *order* of human changes and events, the whole *combination* of all cauſes and effects of human tempers, all the *actions* of free agents, and *all the conſequences* of every revelation plainly in his ſight; and according to this eternal foreknowledge, every revelation receives every thing that is *particular* in it, either as to *time*, *matter*, *manner*, or *place*.

He ſhews his goodneſs in a revelation to *this part* of the world, not becauſe it is a *part* that *alone* wants it, not becauſe he can beſtow his *favours* as he pleaſes, but becauſe by acting *ſo* with *ſuch* a part, he *beſt* ſhews his goodneſs and regard to the *whole*. He reveals himſelf at *ſuch* a *time*, not becauſe he at *that time* begins to have a *partial* or *particular* kindneſs, but becauſe by ſo *timeing* his goodneſs, he *beſt ſhews* his care and goodneſs throughout the *whole duration* of human things, from the beginning to the end of the world. And it is becauſe he had the *ſame good* will towards mankind in *every age*, that he does what he does in any *particular* age.

And if by the *particular* time and manner of any revelation, the *whole race* of mankind receive more benefit from it; if more are rais'd to happineſs by it, and fewer are made miſerable by a blameable *uſing* or *refuſing* it, than could have happen'd by *any other* time, or manner of giving it to the World, conſiſtent with the natural freedom of men; then God by being particular in the time and place of giving it, is not merciful to a *few*, and cruel to *many*, but is *moſt* merciful to *all*; becauſe he only choſe *ſuch time*, and *place*, and *perſons*, becauſe *all* would receive more benefit from it, than they poſſibly could from the choice of any other time, or place, or perſons.

All complains therefore about that which is *particular* or *ſeemingly* partial in the time and manner of any revelation, are very unjuſtifiable; and ſhew, that we are diſcontent at God's proceedings, becauſe he acts like himſelf, does what is *beſt* and *fitteſt* to be done, and governs the world, not according to our weak imaginations, but according to his own infinite perfections.

We will not allow a Providence to be *right*, unleſs we can comprehend and explain the reaſonableneſs of all its ſteps; and yet it could not *poſſibly* be right, unleſs its proceedings were as much *above* our comprehenſion, as our wiſdom is *below* that which is infinite.

For

For if the *relations* of *things* and *perſons*, and the *fitneſs* reſulting from thence, be the *rule* of God's actions; then all the revelations that come from God, muſt have their *fitneſs* reſulting from the relation his foreknowledge bears to the *various ſtates*, *conditions*, *tempers*, and *actions* of free agents, and the *various effects* of every manner of revelation.

But if God cannot act worthy of himſelf in any manner of revelation, unleſs he acts according to a fitneſs reſulting from this relation; then we have the higheſt certainty, that he muſt act by a *rule* that lies out of our ſight, and that his Providence in this particular muſt be incomprehenſible to us; for this very reaſon, becauſe it has that very fitneſs, wiſdom and goodneſs in it, that it ought to have.

CHAP. III.

Shewing how far human reaſon is enabled to judge of the reaſonableneſs, truth and certainty of divine Revelation.

THE former chapter has plainly ſhewn, from the ſtate and relation between God and man, that we muſt be ſtrangers to

the true reaſons on which a divine revelation is founded, both as to its *time*, *matter*, and *manner*.

But it is here objected, *If God by reaſon of his own perfections muſt be thus myſterious and incomprehenſible, both in the matter and manner of divine revelation; How can we know what revelations we are to receive as divine? How can we be blam'd for rejecting this, or receiving that, if we can't comprehend the reaſons on which every revelation is founded, both as to its matter and manner?*

Juſt as we may be blam'd for ſome notions of God, and commended for others, tho' we can have no notions of God, but ſuch as are myſterious and inconceivable. We are not without ſome natural capacity of judging right of God, of finding out his perfections, and proving what is or is not worthy to be aſcribed to him. Yet what the divine perfections are in themſelves, what they imply and contain in their own nature and manner of exiſtence, is altogether myſterious and inconceivable by us at preſent. If therefore a man may be blameable or commendable for his right or wrong belief of a God; then a man may be accountable for a right or wrong belief of ſuch matters, as are in their own nature too myſterious for his comprehenſion. And tho' a man knows the reaſons of a divine revelation, either as to its *matter* or *manner*, as imperfectly as he knows the divine nature; yet

yet he may be as liable to account for believing *falſe revelations*, as for *idolatry*; and as full of guilt for rejecting a *true revelation*, as for denying the only *true God*.

Secondly, Tho' we are inſufficient for comprehending the *reaſons* on which the particular *matter* or *manner* of any divine revelation is founded; yet we may be ſo far ſufficient judges of the *reaſons* for *receiving* or not *receiving* a revelation as divine, as to make our conduct therein juſtly accountable to God.

For if God can ſhew a revelation to proceed from him by the *ſame undeniable* evidence, as he ſhews the *creation* to be his *work*; if he can make himſelf as viſible in a *particular extraordinary* manner, as he is by his *general* and *ordinary* providence; then tho' we are as unqualify'd to judge of the myſteries of a *revelation*, as we are to judge of the myſteries in *creation* and *providence*; yet we may be as fully oblig'd to receive a revelation, as to acknowledge the creation to be the work of God; and as highly criminal for disbelieving it, as for denying a general Providence.

Adam, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Moſes* were very incompetent judges of the reaſons on which the particular revelations made to them were founded; but this did not hinder their ſufficient aſſurance, that ſuch revelations came from God, becauſe they were

prov'd

prov'd to come from God in the ſame manner, and for the ſame reaſons, as the creation is proved to be the Work of God.

And as *Adam* and *Noah* muſt ſee every thing wonderful, myſterious, and above their comprehenſions in thoſe new worlds, into which they were introduc'd by God; ſo they could no more expect that he ſhould require nothing of them, but what they would enjoin themſelves, than that their own *frame*, the *nature* of the creation, the *providence* of God, or the *ſtate* of human life, ſhould be exactly as they would have it.

And if their poſterity will let no *meſſages* from heaven, no *prophecies* and *miracles* perſuade them, that God can call them to any duties, but ſuch they muſt enjoin themſelves; or to the belief of any doctrines, but ſuch as their own minds can ſuggeſt; nor to any methods of changing their preſent ſtate of weakneſs and diſorder for a happy immortality, but ſuch as ſuit their own *taſte*, *temper*, and way of reaſoning; 'tis becauſe they are grown ſenſleſs of the myſteries of creation and providence with which they are ſurrounded, and forget the awful prerogative of infinite wiſdom over the weakeſt, loweſt rank of intelligent beings.

For the *excellence* of a revelation is to be acknowledg'd by us, for the ſame reaſon that we are to acknowledge the excellence of creation

creation and providence; not becauſe they are wholly according to human conception, and have no myſteries, but becauſe they are prov'd to be of God.

And a revelation is to be receiv'd as coming from God, not becauſe of its internal excellence, or becauſe we judge it to be worthy of God; but becauſe God has declar'd it to be his, in as *plain* and *undeniable* a manner, as he has declar'd *creation* and *providence* to be his.

For though no revelation can come from God, but what is truly worthy of him, and full of every internal excellence; yet what is truly *worthy* of God to be *reveal'd*, can't poſſibly be known by us, but by a revelation from himſelf.

And as we can only know what is worthy of God in creation, by knowing what he has created; ſo we can no otherway poſſibly know what is worthy of God to be reveal'd, but by a revelation. And he that pretends, independently of any revelation, to ſhew *how*, and in what manner God ought to make a revelation worthy of himſelf, is as great a *Viſionary*, as he that ſhould pretend independently of the creation, or without learning any thing from it, to ſhew how God ought to have proceeded in it, to make it worthy of himſelf. For as God alone knows how to create worthy of himſelf, and nothing can poſſibly be proved to be worthy to be created by him, but becauſe

cauſe he has already created it; ſo God alone knows what is worthy of himſelf in a revelation, and nothing can poſſibly be proved worthy to be reveal'd by him, but becauſe he has already reveal'd it.

Hence we may ſee how little this *writer* is govern'd by the *reaſon* and *nature* of things, who proceeds upon this as an undeniable principle, that we could not know a revelation to be divine, unleſs we knew antecedently to revelation, what God could teach or require of us by it. Thus, ſays he, *Were we not capable by our reaſon of knowing what the divine goodneſs could command, or forbid his creatures antecedently to any external revelation, we could not diſtinguiſh the true inſtituted religion from the* many *falſe ones**.

Juſt as *wild* and *viſionary*, as if it was ſaid, Were we not capable by our reaſon of knowing what kind or order of beings God *ought* to create, *independently* of any thing we learn from the creation, we could never prove this or that creation to proceed from him. Did we not antecedently to facts and experience know by our own reaſon what ought to be the method and manner of divine providence, we could never prove that the providence which governs nations and perſons is a divine providence.

For if a revelation could have no proof that it was divine, unleſs we by our reaſon *antecedently* to *all* revelation, knew *all* that *any*

* P. 66.

any revelation could contain, or require of us; then it undeniably follows, that no *providence* or *creation* could be prov'd to be divine, unleſs we by our reaſon *independently* of creation and providence, could tell what *kind* of beings God ought to create, or what *manner* of providence he ought to obſerve.

For that which can't be aſcrib'd to God in revelation, becauſe it is unworthy of his wiſdom and goodneſs, can't be aſcrib'd to God in creation and providence.

Again, He proceeds to ſhew that a revelation from God can't contain any thing, but what human reaſon can prove from the nature of things; for this reaſon, becauſe if God could require any thing more of us than what our own reaſon could thus prove, he muſt then require *without* reaſon, be an *arbitrary* being, and then there is an end of all religion.

Now this argument proceeds thus; If God does not act according to the *meaſure* of *human* reaſon, he cannot act according to *reaſon it ſelf*. If he requires any thing more of us, than what we *think* the nature of things requires of us, then he cannot act according to the nature of things. If he makes any thing a rule or law to us, which we would not impoſe upon our ſelves, then he muſt make laws by *mere will*, without any reaſon for them. If he requires us to believe any thing of his own nature, or our nature, more than we could have known of

our ſelves, then he muſt act by *caprice* and *humour*, and be an arbitrary being. If his *infinite* wiſdom is in any matters of revelation *greater* than ours; if it is not in every thing he reveals *meaſurable* by ours, it cannot be wiſdom at all, much leſs can it be infinite wiſdom.

That is, if he is *more powerful* than we are, he cannot be *omnipotent*; if he is *more perfect* than we are, he cannot be *all perfection*; if he acts upon *greater*, or *higher*, or *more* reaſonable motives than we do, he can't be a *reaſonable* being.

Now if theſe abſurdities are not plain and manifeſt to every common underſtanding, 'tis in vain to diſpute about any thing; but if they are, then it is as plain this writer's great argument againſt Chriſtianity, and firſt principle of his *rational religion*, is in the ſame ſtate of undeniable abſurdity, as being ſolely built upon them.

Thus, ſays he, *Natural religion takes in all thoſe duties which flow from the reaſon and the nature of things* *. That is, natural religion takes in all thoſe things that bare human reaſon can of its ſelf diſcover from the nature of things. This is granted; but what follows? Why, ſays he, *Conſequently was there an inſtituted religion which differs from that of nature, its precepts muſt be arbitrary, as not founded on the nature and reaſon of things, but depending on mere will and pleaſure,*

* *Page* 114.

pleaſure, otherwiſe it would be the ſame with natural religion *.

That is, ſince natural religion contains all that bare human reaſon can of its ſelf diſcover, if God was to reveal any thing more than human reaſon can diſcover, he muſt be an arbitrary being, and act by mere will and pleaſure; otherwiſe his revelation would be the ſame and nothing more than human reaſon.

Here you ſee all the abſurdities juſt mention'd are expreſly contain'd in this argument, God is all *humour*, *caprice*, and *mere arbitrary will*, if his revelation is not ſtrictly in every reſpect the ſame with human reaſon. That is, he is *without* wiſdom, *without* reaſon, if his wiſdom and reaſon *exceed* ours. He has *no reaſon*, nor *wiſdom*, if his reaſon and wiſdom are *infinite*.

Secondly, This argument, if it were allow'd, leads directly to *atheiſm*. For if a revelation cannot be divine, if it contains any thing myſterious, whoſe fitneſs and neceſſity can't be explain'd by human reaſon, then neither *creation* nor *providence* can be prov'd to be divine, for they are both of them more myſterious than the Chriſtian revelation. And revelation it ſelf is *therefore* myſterious, becauſe creation and providence cannot be deliver'd from myſtery. And was it poſſible for man to comprehend the rea-

* *Page* 16.

ſons, on which the *manner* of the creation and divine providence are founded, then revelation might be without myſteries.

But if the myſteries in revelation are owing to that, which is by the nature of things incomprehenſible in creation and providence, then it is very unreaſonable to reject revelation, becauſe it has that which it muſt neceſſarily have, not from it ſelf, but from the nature and ſtate of things. And much worſe is it to deny revelation to be divine, for ſuch a reaſon, as makes it equally fit to deny *creation* and *providence* to be of God.

For if every thing is *arbitrary*, whoſe *fitneſs and expedience* human reaſon cannot *prove* and *explain*, then ſurely an *inviſible over-ruling providence*, that orders all things in a manner, and for reaſons known only to its ſelf; that ſubjects human life, and human affairs to what changes it pleaſes; that confounds the beſt laid deſigns, and makes great effects ariſe from folly and imprudence; that gives the race not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong; that brings good men into affliction, and makes the wicked proſperous; ſurely ſuch a providence muſt be highly arbitrary.

And therefore if this argument is to be admitted, it leads directly to *atheiſm*, and brings us under a greater neceſſity of rejecting this notion of divine providence, on the account of its myſteries, than of rejecting a revela-

revelation that is myſterious in any of its doctrines. And if, as this writer frequently argues, God cannot be ſaid to deal with us as rational agents; if he requires any thing of us, that our reaſon cannot prove to be neceſſary, ſurely he cannot be ſaid to deal with us as rational and moral agents, if he over-rules our perſons and affairs, and diſappoints our counſels, makes weakneſs proſperous, and wiſdom unſucceſsful in a *ſecret* and *inviſible* manner, and for reaſons and ends that we have no means of knowing.

And if it may be ſaid, To what purpoſe has he given us reaſon, if that is not ſolely to give laws to us; ſurely it may better be ſaid, To what purpoſe has he given us reaſon to take care of ourſelves to provide for our happineſs, to prepare *proper* means for certain ends,..if there is an over-ruling providence that changes the *natural courſe* of things, that confounds the beſt laid deſigns, and diſappoints the wiſeſt counſels?

There is nothing therefore half ſo myſterious in the Chriſtian revelation, conſider'd in it ſelf, as there is in that *inviſible* providence which all muſt hold that believe a God. And tho' there is enough plain in providence, to excite the adoration of humble and pious minds, yet it has often been a rock of *atheiſm* to thoſe, who make their own reaſon the meaſure of wiſdom.

Again, Tho' the *creation* plainly declares the glory, and wiſdom, and goodneſs of God,

God; yet it has more myſteries in it, more things whoſe fitneſs, expedience, and reaſonableneſs human reaſon can't comprehend, than are to be found in Scripture.

If therefore he reaſons right, who ſays, *If there may be ſome things in a true Religion, whoſe fitneſs and expedience we can't ſee, why not others? Nay, why not the whole? ſince that would make God's laws all of a piece. And if the having of theſe things is no proof of its falſhood, how can any things fit and expedient (which no Religion is without) be a proof of the truth of any one Religion?* * If, I ſay, this is right reaſoning, then it may be ſaid, *If there are things in the creation whoſe fitneſs we can't ſee, why not others? Nay, why not the whole? ſince that would make all God's works of a piece. And if the being of ſuch things as theſe in the creation is not a proof of its not being divine, How can the fitneſs and expedience of any creation prove that it is the work of God?*

Thus does this argument tend wholly to Atheiſm, and concludes with the ſame force againſt *creation* and *providence*, as it does againſt revelation.

This is farther plain from our author's account of the *works* and *laws* of God. 'Tis a firſt principle with him, that God's *laws* and *works* muſt have the ſame infinite wiſdom in them. *That they both alike have the character of infinite wiſdom impreſs'd on them, and*

* *Firſt Addreſs to the Inhabitants of* London, *p.* 57.

and both alike discover their divine original *.

But if so, then nothing can prove any *works* to be of divine original, but that which will prove any *laws* to be of divine original. And nothing can shew any *laws* to be unworthy of God, but what would equally shew *any works* to be unworthy of God. But we have already seen, that no laws can come from God, or be fit for him to make, but such as human reason can prove to be fit and expedient; therefore *no works* can proceed from God, or be worthy of him, but such as human reason can prove to be fit and expedient.

Either therefore there is nothing in the works of the creation, whose fitness and expedience cannot be prov'd; nothing in God's providence over whole nations, and particular persons, whose fitness and expedience can't be explain'd and justify'd by human reason, or else neither creation nor providence can be ascrib'd to God.

He says, *'Tis impossible men should have any just idea of the perfections of God, who think that the dictates of infinite Wisdom don't carry their own evidence with them, or are not by their own innate worth discoverable to all mankind* †.

But if so, then we are oblig'd out of regard to the divine perfections, to deny every creature, or part of the creation, to proceed

* *Page* 124. † *Page* 125.

ceed from God, which does not *carry its own evidence of infinite wiſdom, and diſcover its own innate worth to all mankind.*

Any one muſt eaſily ſee, that I put no force upon this writer's arguments, to give them this atheiſtical tendency, but barely repreſent them as they are in his book.

For ſince it is his own avow'd and repeated principle, that God's *works* and *laws* are both of a kind, and that they muſt both *alike diſcover their divine original*; it neceſſarily follows, that if any *law* or *command* muſt be unfit for God to make, becauſe its fitneſs can't he proved by human reaſon; then every creature, or part of the creation, whoſe fitneſs and expedience cannot be proved by human reaſon, muſt be rejected as unworthy of God. So that this argument leads to Atheiſm, not by any remote conſequence, but by its firſt and immediate tendency.

For according to it, a man is oblig'd out of regard to the divine perfections, to deal with *creation* and *providence*, as this writer does with *Scripture*; and to allow no more of either of them, than ſuits with his own notions of that, which God ought to do in creation and providence.

The true grounds and reaſons on which we are to believe a revelation to be divine, are ſuch external marks and ſigns of God's action and operation, as are a ſufficient proof of it. And if God has no ways of acting

that

that are peculiar and particular to himſelf, and ſuch as ſufficiently prove his action and operation, then revelation can have no ſufficient proof that it comes from God.

And if a revelation had no other proof of its Divinity, but ſuch an internal excellency and fitneſs of its doctrines, as is fully known and approv'd by human reaſon; ſuch an internal excellency would be ſo far from being a ſufficient proof of its Divinity, that it would be a probable objection againſt it. For it has an appearance of great probability, that God would not make an external revelation of that *only*, which was *ſufficiently* and fully known without it.

Altho' therefore no revelation can come from God, whoſe doctrines have not an *internal excellency*, and the *higheſt fitneſs*; yet the non-appearance of ſuch excellency and fitneſs to our reaſon, can't be a diſproof of its Divinity, becauſe it is our ignorance of ſuch matters without revelation, that is the *true ground and reaſon* of God's revealing any thing to us.

The credibility therefore of divine revelation reſts wholly upon *ſuch external* evidence, as is a ſufficient proof of the divine operation, or interpoſition. If there be no ſuch external evidence poſſible; if God has no ways of acting ſo *peculiar* to himſelf, as to be a *ſufficient* proof of his action; then a revelation cannot be ſufficiently prov'd to be divine.

I appeal therefore to the miracles and prophecies on which Chriſtianity is founded, as a ſufficient proof it is a divine revelation. And ſhall here conſider, what is objected againſt the ſufficiency of this kind of proof.

1. It is objected, That miracles can't prove a *falſe*, or *bad* doctrine, to be *true* and *good*; therefore miracles, *as ſuch*, can't prove the truth of any revelation.

But tho' miracles can't prove falſe to be true, or bad to be good; yet they may prove, that we ought to receive ſuch doctrines, both as true and good, which we could not know to be true and good without ſuch miracles. Not becauſe the miracles have any influence upon the things reveal'd, but becauſe they teſtify the credibility of the revealer, as having God's teſtimony to the truth of that which he reveals.

If therefore miracles can be a ſufficient proof of God's ſending any perſons to ſpeak in his name, and under his authority; then they may be a ſufficient proof of the truth and divinity of a revelation, tho' they can't prove that which is falſe to be true.

Our author therefore brings a farther objection againſt this uſe of miracles.

If, ſays he, *evil beings can impreſs notions in mens minds as ſtrongly as good beings, and cauſe miracles to be done in confirmation of them; is there any way to know to which of the two, notions thus impreſſed, are owing;*

but

but from their nature and tendency, or internal marks of wiſdom and goodneſs? —— *And if ſo, Can external proofs carry us any farther than the internal proofs do?* *

This objection ſuppoſes, that no miracles, *as ſuch*, can be a ſufficient proof of the divinity of a revelation; for this reaſon, becauſe we don't know the extent of that power, which evil ſpirits have, of doing miracles. But this objection is groundleſs. For, granting that we don't know the nature and extent of that power which evil ſpirits may have; yet if we know *enough* of it to affirm, that the *creation* is not the work of evil ſpirits; if we can ſecurely appeal to the creation, as *a ſufficient proof* of God's action and operation; then we are fully ſecure in appealing to miracles, as a ſufficient proof of a divine revelation.

For if the creation muſt of neceſſity be allow'd to be the work of God, notwithſtanding any *unknown degree* of power in evil ſpirits; if we can as certainly aſcribe it to God, as if we really knew there were no *ſuch* ſpirits; then miracles may be as full a proof of the operation, or interpoſition of God, as if we really knew there were no ſuch ſpirits in being.

I don't ask, Whether the *ſame divine* perfection is neceſſary to foretel ſuch things as are foretold in Scripture, and work ſuch miracles as are there related, as is neceſſary to

* *Page* 243.

create. I don't ask, Whether any power leſs than divine can do ſuch things? I only ask, Whether there is any certainty, that the creation is the work of God? Whether we can be ſure of the divine operation, from the exiſtence of that creation that we are acquainted with? Or, Whether we are in any *doubt* or *uncertainty* about it, becauſe we don't know the *true nature* or *degree* of power that may belong to evil ſpirits?

For if it can be affirm'd with certainty, that the creation is the work of God, notwithſtanding our uncertainty about the degree of power that may belong to evil ſpirits; then we have the ſame certainty, that the *prophecies* and *miracles* recorded in Scripture are to be aſcrib'd to God, as his doing, notwithſtanding our uncertainty of the power of evil ſpirits.

And this is affirm'd, not becauſe *prophecies* and *miracles* require the *ſame degree* of divine power, as to create *ex nihilo*, (for that would be affirming we know not what) but it is affirm'd, becauſe the creation cannot be a *better*, *farther*, or *different* proof of the action or operation of God, than ſuch miracles and prophecies are.

For every reaſon for aſcribing the creation to God, is the ſame reaſon for aſcribing ſuch miracles and prophecies to God; and every argument againſt the certainty of thoſe miracles and prophecies coming from God, is the ſame argument againſt the certainty of the

the creation's being the work of God; for there cannot be more or leſs certainty in one caſe than in the other.

For if evil ſpirits have ſo the creation in their hands, that by reaſon of their power over it, *no miracles* can prove the operation of God, then the operation of God cannot be proved from the creation itſelf.

For the creation can't be prov'd to be the operation of God, unleſs it can be prov'd, that God *ſtill preſides* over it.

And if *all* that which is extraordinary and miraculous may be accounted for, without the interpoſition of God; then nothing that is ordinary and common according to the courſe of nature, can be a proof of the action of God. For there can be no reaſon aſſign'd, why that which is *ordinary* ſhould be aſcrib'd to God, if all that is, or has, or can be miraculous, may be aſcrib'd to evil ſpirits.

Either therefore it muſt be ſaid, that there are or may be miracles, which can't be the effects of evil ſpirits; or elſe nothing that is ordinary and common can be a proof of the operation of God. For if nothing miraculous can be an undeniable proof of God's action, nothing created can be a proof of it.

The matter therefore ſtands thus: There are, and may be miracles that can't be aſcrib'd to evil ſpirits, without aſcribing the creation to them; and which can no more

be

be doubted to come from God, than we can doubt of his being the Creator of the world. There may be miracles therefore, which, *as ſuch*, and conſider'd *in themſelves*, are as full a proof of the *truth* of that which they atteſt, as the creation is of the *fitneſs* of that which is created.

And tho' the *matter* of a revelation is to be attended to, that we may fully underſtand it, and be rightly affected with it; yet the reaſon of our receiving it as divine, muſt reſt upon that *external authority*, which ſhews it to be of God.

And the authority of miracles, ſufficiently plain and apparent, are of themſelves a full and neceſſary reaſon for receiving a revelation, which both as to its *matter* and *manner*, would not be approv'd by us without them.

It ſeems therefore to be a *needleſs*, and too *great* a conceſſion, which ſome *learned divines* make in this matter, when they grant, that we muſt firſt examine the doctrines reveal'd by miracles, and ſee whether they contain any thing in them *abſurd*, or *unworthy* of God, before we can receive the miracles as divine. For,

1. Where there can be nothing doubted, nor any more requir'd, to make the miracles ſufficiently plain and evident, there can be no doubt about the truth and goodneſs of the doctrine they atteſt. Miracles in ſuch a ſtate

a ſtate as this are the laſt reſort, they determine for themſelves, and cannot be try'd by any thing farther.

And as the *exiſtence* of things is the higheſt and utmoſt evidence of God's having created them, and not to be try'd by our *judgments* about the reaſonableneſs and ends of their creation; ſo a courſe of plain undeniable miracles, atteſting the truth of a revelation, are the *higheſt* and *utmoſt* evidence of its coming from God, and not to be try'd by our judgments about the *reaſonableneſs* or *neceſſity* of its doctrines.

And this is to be affirm'd, not becauſe God is too good to ſuffer us to be brought into ſuch a ſnare, but becauſe we can know nothing of God, if ſuch a courſe of miracles are not a ſufficient proof of his action and interpoſition. For if doctrines reveal'd by ſuch an *undeniable change* in the natural courſe of things, have not thence a ſufficient proof, that they are divine doctrines; then *no laws* that are according to the natural ſtate of things, can have *thence* any proof, that they are *divine laws*.

For if *no courſe* of *miracles* can be of *its ſelf* a ſufficient proof, that *that* which is atteſted by them, is atteſted by God; then no *ſettl'd, ordinary* ſtate of things can of *its ſelf* be a proof, that *that* which is requir'd by the natural ſtate of things, is requir'd by God.

2. To

2. To try miracles, ſufficiently plain and evident, by *our judgments* of the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines reveal'd by them, ſeems to be beginning at the wrong end. For the doctrines had not been reveal'd, but becauſe of our ignorance of the *nature* and *reaſonableneſs* of them; nor had the miracles been wrought, but to *prevent* our *acquieſcing* in our own judgments about the worth and value of them.

3. To ſay, That no miracles, however plain and evident, are to be receiv'd as divine, if they atteſt any doctrine that appears to *human reaſon* to be abſurd, or unworthy of God, is very unreaſonable. For what is it that can be call'd *human reaſon* in this reſpect? Is it any thing elſe than human opinion? And is there any thing that mankind are in greater uncertainty, or more contrary to one another, than in their opinions about what is abſurd, or unworthy of God in religion? And is it not the very end and deſign of a divine revelation, to help us to a rule that may put an end to the diviſions of human reaſon, and furniſh us with an authority for believing ſuch things, as we ſhould not think it reaſonable to believe without it?

And how weak and uſeleſs muſt that revelation be, which has not ſufficient authority to teach us *new notions* of religion, and perſuade

perſwade us to believe that to be reaſonable and worthy of God, which we could not believe to be ſo upon a leſs authority.

But if this be the caſe, as it ſeems clearly to be, then we are not to try plain and evident miracles of the higheſt kind, by our judgments of the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines reveal'd by them; but miracles are to be receiv'd, as of ſufficient authority to form and govern our opinions about the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines.

It may perhaps be ſaid, tho' the authority of miracles is ſufficient to govern our opinions in doctrines that are only myſterious, and above the comprehenſion of our reaſon, yet that which is plainly and groſly abſurd, or unworthy of God, cannot, nor ought to be receiv'd upon any authority of the greateſt miracles.

This objection is vain and abſurd; it is vain becauſe it relates to a caſe that never was the caſe of miracles; and 'tis abſurd, becauſe it is providing againſt a caſe that never can happen to miracles. For to ſuppoſe any thing in its own nature groſly abſurd, or unworthy of God, to be atteſted with the higheſt evidence of miracles, is as impoſſible and contradictory a ſuppoſition, as to ſuppoſe God to create rational beings wicked in their nature, that they might thereby be of ſervice to the devil. Theſe two ſuppoſitions have not the ſmalleſt difference either in abſurdity, or impoſſibility.

Again, The hiſtory of magical wonders, and extraordinary things done by evil ſpirits, is no objection againſt the ſufficiency of that proof that ariſes from miracles. For the queſtion is not, whether nothing that is extraordinary can be done by evil ſpirits, in any circumſtances, but whether nothing that is miraculous can, as ſuch, be a proof of its being done by God. For theſe two caſes are very conſiſtent, it may be very poſſible for evil ſpirits to do things extraordinary in ſome circumſtances, as where people enter into contracts with them, and reſign themſelves up to their power, and yet that miracles may in *other circumſtances*, merely as miracles, be a ſufficient proof of their being done by God.

Thus the caſe of the *Egyptian magicians*, is ſo far from abating the weight of miracles, that it is a great proof of their authority, conſider'd in themſelves. For the *Magicians* could proceed but a little way in their contention with *Moſes*, they were ſoon made to feel his ſuperior power in the ſame manner, as the reſt of the *Egyptians* did, and to confeſs that his miracles were done by the *finger of God*. This very inſtance therefore fully ſhews, that miracles, *as ſuch*, may be a ſufficient proof of God's interpoſition. For if, in the caſe of a contention, the ſuperior power muſt be aſcrib'd to God, then miracles as *ſuch*, or of *ſuch a kind*, as having none equal to them, or able to ſtand

againſt

againſt them, muſt in ſuch a ſtate be a ſufficient proof of their being done by God, and give a ſufficient warrant to receive any doctrine that is atteſted by them.

For, let it be ſuppos'd, that the *Egyptian* Magicians had deſtroy'd the power of *Moſes*, and brought all the *miraculous evils* upon the *Iſraelites*, as enemies of the *Egyptian* Gods, which he brought upon them; what conſequence muſt *reaſon* have drawn from ſuch an event? Could reaſon have prov'd, that the God that made the world was *one* God, and that he alone ought to be worſhipp'd? Or that the *Egyptians* ought to have left their Gods, who had the *whole creation* in their hands in ſuch a manner, as to change the nature of things as they pleas'd, and deſtroy every power that oppos'd them.

Now either the caſe here ſuppos'd is poſſible, or it is impoſſible. If it is poſſible, then all the reaſons for worſhipping the *one true God*, taken from the *nature* and *ſtate* of the creation, may entirely ceaſe, and be ſo many reaſons for idolatrous worſhip. For no one can have any reaſons for worſhipping the one true God, from the nature and ſtate of the creation, if other Gods have the greateſt power over it, and can turn every thing into a *plague* upon thoſe that do not worſhip them.

But if this caſe is impoſſible, then it neceſſarily follows, that miracles, *as ſuch*, and

conſider'd *in themſelves*, may be certain and infallible proofs of God's interpoſition. For this caſe can only be impoſſible, becauſe the greateſt, plaineſt miracles can't poſſibly be on the ſide of error. But if this can't be, then the greateſt, plaineſt miracles, *as ſuch*, and conſider'd *in themſelves*, are an infallible mark of truth.

And he that abides by miracles in ſuch circumſtances, as proofs of the operation of the *one true* God, has the ſame certainty of proceeding right, as he that takes the ſtate and nature of the creation to be the effect of the one true God.

And as miracles thus conſider'd in themſelves, are the higheſt and moſt undeniable evidence of the truth and divinity of any revelation; ſo Chriſtianity ſtands fully diſtinguiſh'd from all other religions, by the higheſt and moſt undeniable evidence; ſince it has all the proof that the *higheſt ſtate* of miracles can give, and every other religion is without any ſupport from them.

And tho' this writer, with a boldneſs worthy of himſelf, often puts all *traditional religions* upon a level; yet he might have ſhewn himſelf as much a friend to truth and ſobriety, by aſſerting that all *arguments* are equally concluſive, all *tempers* equally virtuous, all *deſigns* equally honeſt, and all *hiſtories* and *fables* equally ſupported by evidence of facts.

But

But his prodigious raſhneſs in aſſerting, at all adventures, whatever he pleaſes, is not confin'd to matters of fact, but is as remarkably viſible in that part of his book which pretends to argument; as may be fully ſeen by the following paragraphs.

" 'Tis the obſervation, ſays he, of *natu-*
" *raliſts*, that there is no ſpecies of crea-
" tures, but what have ſome *innate weak-*
" *neſs*, which makes them an eaſy prey to
" other animals that know how to make
" the advantage of it. Now the *peculiar*
" *foible* of mankind is *ſuperſtition*, which
" at all times has made them liable to be
" practis'd on, not by creatures of different
" ſpecies, but by thoſe of their own; who
" by a confident pretence of knowing more
" than their neighbours, have firſt circum-
" vented the *many*, the *credulous*, and *un-*
" *wary*; and afterwards forc'd the *free-think-*
" *ing few into an outward compliance* *."
Here it is to be obſerv'd,

1. That ſuperſtition is the *peculiar foible* in man; as natural and intrinſick to him, as an *innate weakneſs* in animals. He has it therefore from God and nature, in the ſame manner as animals have their innate weakneſs. And therefore it muſt be as unnatural for men to be without ſuperſtition, or not act according to it, as for animals to be without their innate weakneſs.

2. Man-

* *Page* 169.

2. Mankind are, according to this account, in their natural ſtate entirely incapable of knowing any true religion. For if, as our author ſaith, *ſuperſtition be the oppoſite to true religion*; if this ſuperſtition be the *innate peculiar foible* of human nature; if mankind are not only to begin and end their lives amongſt thoſe that have all the *ſame foible*, but, what is worſe, have at all times had this innate foible increas'd and practis'd upon by the crafty pretenders of their own ſpecies; are they not inwardly and outwardly fix'd in ſuperſtition, the *oppoſite to true religion?*

Judge therefore by this, what our author *really* thinks of the *excellency* and *perfection* of the light of nature; and how much meaning he has in ſuch exclamations as theſe: *And now let any one ſay, how 'tis poſſible God could more fully make known his will to all intelligent creatures, than by making every thing within and without them*, a declaration of it *.

That is, How can they have a better *inward guide* to true religion, than by having an *innate* peculiar foible contrary to it? How can they have a better *outward call* to the true religion, than by having all the world conſpiring to fix them in ſuperſtition?

For this, he ſays, is their ſtate; this innate peculiar foible has been at all times increas'd

* *Page* 19.

creas'd and practis'd upon by the more cunning of their ſpecies, and the *free-thinking few forced into an outward compliance.* It is this inward and outward ſtate of Man, that throws our author into ſo much tranſport at its abſolute perfection, as to matters of religion.

Again; Judge from this with what piety and ſincerity he ſpeaks of God, when he ſays, *Infinite wiſdom directed by infinite goodneſs, will certainly give us equal degrees of evidence for religious truths, which ſo much concern us, as it has done for truths of leſs importance* *. For if our Author believ'd himſelf in this aſſertion, how could he believe ſuperſtition to be the *peculiar* inborn foible of man? For can religious truths have the *ſame degrees of evidence* with things of leſs importance, if man's *peculiar foible* relates to religion?

Again; He cries out, *In what point is it, that men of the meaneſt abilities may not know their duty to God? Can't they tell what ſentiments inſpire them with love and reverence for the deity?* † Now put theſe things together, and then his argument will proceed thus: If ſuperſtition is *contrary* to true religion, and ſuperſtition be the *innate peculiar* foible of all men, how can the *weakeſt* man be in any miſtake about what is right or wrong in religion? Let the reader here judge, whether I put any force upon his words.

Judge

* *Page* 131. † *Page* 280.

Judge again, how ſerious this Author muſt be in a variety of ſuch arguments as theſe: *If*, ſays he, *men have been at all times oblig'd to avoid ſuperſtition, and embrace true religion, there muſt have been at all times ſufficient marks of diſtinction.* And again: *Nothing*, ſays he, *can be a greater libel on the true religion, than to ſuppoſe it does not contain ſuch internal marks, as will, even to the meaneſt capacity, diſtinguiſh it from all falſe religions* *. But if ſuperſtition is the *innate, peculiar* foible of mankind, where muſt a man of the *meaneſt capacity* look for the *internal marks* of true religion? And if all the world is, and always was, over-run with ſuperſtition, and the *free-thinking* few have always been forc'd into an *outward compliance*, where muſt ſuch a man look for the *outward marks* of true religion?

To give you one inſtance more of this writer's extravagant and inconſiſtent notions.

He makes *reaſon*, or *natural religion*, to be God's *internal revelation*, differing *only* from *external revelation in the manner of its being communicated.* He rejects *external revelation* as unworthy of God, becauſe it has not been ſufficiently made known at *all times*, and *all places*; yet he ſets up an internal revelation, as worthy of God, which has never been made known to any *one man* of any *time* or *place* in the world. For what one man

* *Page* 295.

man ever knew that *reaſon* was God's *internal revelation*, to which nothing could be added by any external revelation?

It is a mighty complaint with our author, againſt chriſtianity, that ſo much happineſs ſhould be deferred till the time of *Tiberius*, and that it ſhould be communicated to no greater a part of the world than chriſtianity hath been. But is not this a *judicious* complaint in the mouth of a perſon, that is ſetting up a religion that has been communicated to no body but himſelf?

I know nothing that can be ſaid for our author, in excuſe of ſo much confuſion and ſelf-contradiction, unleſs it be the particular hardſhips of his *ſect*. The *free-thinking few*, he ſays, *are forced into an outward compliance*; and that which *forces* a man into a ſtate of hypocriſy, may force him into a great deal of confuſion and ſelf-contradiction.

To return: I have, from a conſideration of the ſtate and condition of man, and the ſeveral relations which God ſtands in towards his creatures, ſhewn, that it is utterly impoſſible for human reaſon to be a competent judge of the fitneſs, or unfitneſs, of all that God may, or may not, require of us. The two following chapters ſhall ſtate the nature and perfection of reaſon, conſider'd in itſelf, or as it is a faculty, or principle of action in human nature.

CHAP. IV.

Of the ſtate and nature of reaſon, as it is in man; and how its perfection in matters of religion is to be known.

THIS writer, and others, who take to themſelves the names of *free thinkers*, make their court to the world, by pretending to vindicate the right that all men have, to judge and act according to their own reaſon. Tho', I think, the world have no more to thank them for on this account, than if they had pretended to aſſert the right that every man has, to ſee *only* with his *own eyes*, or to hear *only* with his *own ears*.

For their own reaſon always did, does, and ever will, govern rational creatures, in every thing they determine, either in ſpeculation or practice. 'Tis not a matter of *duty* for men to uſe their own reaſon, but of *neceſſity*: and 'tis as impoſſible to do otherwiſe, as for a being that cannot act but from choice, to act without choice. And if a man was to try not to act according to his own reaſon or choice, he would

would find himſelf under the ſame difficulty, as he that tries to think, without thinking upon ſomething.

And if God was to command us, by freſh revelations every day of our lives, not to act from a principle of reaſon and choice, ſuch revelations could have no more effect upon us, than if they came from the weakeſt amongſt mankind. For, as our principle of acting is not derived from ourſelves, ſo it is no more in our power to alter it, or contradict it, than it is in the power of matter not to *gravitate*, or to exiſt, without taking up ſome *place*.

Man is under the ſame neceſſity of acting from his own choice, that *matter* is of not acting at all: and a being, whoſe principle of action is reaſon and choice, can no more act without it, or contrary to it, than an extended being can be without extenſion.

All men therefore are equally reaſonable in this reſpect, that they are, and muſt be, by a *neceſſity* of nature, equally directed and govern'd by their own reaſon and choice.

For, as the principle of action, in human nature, is *reaſon* and *choice*, and nothing can be done, or believed, but for *ſome reaſon*, any more than a thing can be choſen and not be choſen; ſo the acting according to one's own reaſon, is not the privilege of the *philoſopher*, but eſſential to human nature; and as inſeparable from

all perſons, as ſelf-conſciouſneſs, or a ſenſe of their own exiſtence.

The diſpute therefore betwixt chriſtians and *unbelievers*, concerning reaſon, is not, whether men are to uſe their *own reaſon*, any more, than whether they are to ſee with their *own eyes*; but whether every man's reaſon muſt needs guide him by its *own light*, or muſt ceaſe to guide him, as ſoon as it guides him by a light borrowed from revelation? This is the true ſtate of the queſtion, not whether reaſon is to be followed, but when it is *beſt* followed? not whether it is to be our guide, but how it may be made our *ſafeſt guide*.

The *free thinkers* therefore, rather appeal to the paſſions, than reaſon of the people, when they repreſent the clergy and chriſtianity as enemies to reaſon, and juſt thinking, and themſelves as friends and advocates for the uſe of reaſon.

For chriſtians pretend to no guide, but under the guidance of their reaſon; nor to aſſert any thing, but becauſe it can't be reaſonably deny'd. They oppoſe unbelievers, not becauſe they *reaſon*, but becauſe they reaſon *ill*. They receive revelation, not to ſuppreſs the power, but to improve the light of their reaſon; not to take away their right of judging for themſelves, but to ſecure them from falſe Judgments: and whatever is required to be believed, or practiſed, by revelation, is only ſo far required,

as

as there is reaſon for it; or, becauſe it is more reaſonable than the contrary.

If therefore a poor peaſant ſhould call upon our free-thinkers, to lay aſide their *bigotry* to *ideas*, *arguments*, and *philoſophy*, and govern themſelves by reaſon; it would be no more abſurd, than for them to exhort chriſtians to lay aſide their bigotry to *creeds* and *doctrines* of revelation, and to govern themſelves by reaſon.

For it may as well be affirmed, that a man departs from the uſe of his reaſon, becauſe he depends upon *ideas*, *arguments*, and *ſyllogiſms*; as that he departs from the uſe of his reaſon, becauſe he proceeds upon *prophecies*, *miracles*, and *revelations*.

And if he uſes his reaſon weakly, and is ſubject to deluſion in theſe points, he no more renounces his reaſon, or goes over to another direction, than *Hobbes*, *Spinoſa*, *Bayle*, *Collins*, or *Toland*, renounce their reaſon, when they take their own *fancies* to be demonſtrations.

Chriſtians therefore don't differ from unbelievers in the conſtant uſe of their reaſon, but in the manner of uſing it: As *virtuous* men differ from *rakes*, not in their deſire of happineſs, but in their manner of ſeeking it.

And tho' this writer is very free in his charge of *bigotry* upon chriſtians, yet I may venture to challenge him to ſhew, that there can poſſibly be more *bigotry* on the ſide of religion,

religion, than there may be againſt it. For as *bigotry* is nothing but weak reaſoning, ſo *infidels* are entitled to as large a ſhare of it, as believers. And to ſuppoſe that bigotry may be charged upon thoſe who have a zeal *for* chriſtianity, but cannot be charged on them that are zealous *againſt* it, is as juſt a way of proceeding, as to ſay of two *brothers*, that one is to be charged with *paſſion*, becauſe he *loves* his father, but the other cannot be charged with paſſion, becauſe he *hates* his father.

And as men that write againſt religion, are as much concerned to have it falſe, as thoſe who write for it, are to have it true; ſo all that there is to blind and prejudice the latter, has the ſame power to blind and prejudice the former.

It appears from what has been ſaid, that every man's own reaſon is his only principle of action, and that he muſt judge according to it, whether he receives, or rejects, revelation.

Now altho' every man is to judge according to the light of his own reaſon, yet his reaſon has very little light that can be called *its own*. For, as we derive our naturefrom our parents, ſo that which we call generally *natural knowledge*, or the light of *nature*, is a knowledge and light that is made natural to us, by the *ſame authority* which makes a certain *language*, certain *cuſtoms*, and *modes* of behaviour, natural to us.

Nothing

Nothing ſeems to be our own, but a *bare capacity* to be inſtructed, a nature *fitted* for any impreſſions; as capable of vice as virtue; as ready to be made a vicious animal, as a religious rational creature; as liable to be made a *Hottentot*, by being born among hottentotes, as to be a *Chriſtian*, by being born among chriſtians.

So that our moral and religious knowledge is not to be imputed to the internal light of our *own reaſon* and *nature*, but to the happineſs of having been born amongſt reaſonable beings, who have made a ſenſe of religion and morality as natural to our minds, as *articulate language* to our tongues.

It is not my intention by this, to ſignify that there is not a *good* and *evil*, *right* and *wrong*, founded in the nature of things; or that morality has any dependance upon the *opinions* or *cuſtoms* of men; but only to ſhew, that we *find* out this right and wrong, come to a *ſenſe* of this good and evil, not by any inward ſtrength or light that nature of itſelf affords, but by ſuch *external means*, as people are taught *articulate* language, *civility*, *politeneſs*, or any other *rules* of civil life.

Men don't prefer virtue to vice, from a philoſophical contemplation of the fitneſs of the one, and the unfitneſs of the other, founded in the nature of things; but becauſe it is a judgment as *early* in their minds,

minds, as their knowledge of the words, virtue and vice.

And it can no more be reaſonably affirm'd, that our knowledge of God and divine things, our opinions in morality, of the excellency of this or that virtue, of the immortality of our ſouls, of a future life of rewards and puniſhments, are the effects of our natural light; than it can be reaſonably affirmed, that our living in *ſociety*, our *articulate* language, and *erect poſture*, are owing to the light of nature.

For, as all mankind find themſelves in this ſtate, before any reaſoning about it, as *education*, and *human authority* have ſet our bodies *upright*, taught us *language*, and accuſtom'd us to the *rules* and *manners* of a ſocial life; ſo *education*, and the *ſame human* authority, have impreſſed and planted in our minds, certain notions of God and divine things, and formed us to a ſenſe of good and evil, a belief of our ſoul's immortality, and the expectation of another life.

And mankind are no more left to find out a God, or the fitneſs of moral virtue, by their own reaſon, than they are left to their own reaſon to find out who are their parents, or to find out the fitneſs of ſpeaking an articulate language, or the reaſonableneſs of living in ſociety.

On the contrary; we know that our manner of coming into the world ſubjects us,

us, without any choice, to the *language*, *ſentiments*, *opinions* and *manners* of thoſe amongſt whom we are born. And although when we come to any ſtrength or art of reaſoning, or have a *genius* for philoſophick enquiries, we may thence deduce proofs of the *Being* and *Attributes* of God, the *reaſonableneſs* of religion and morality, the *nature* of our ſouls, and the *certainty* of a future ſtate, and find that the opinions and tradition of mankind concerning theſe things are well founded; yet theſe are an *after-knowledge*, not common to men, but accidental confirmations of that knowledge and belief of a God, religion and morality, which were before fix'd in us, more or leſs, by education, and the authority of thoſe amongſt whom we have liv'd.

And as no *Philoſopher* ever prov'd the *fitneſs* of human nature for a *ſocial* life, from principles of reaſon and ſpeculation, who had not *firſt* been taught the nature and advantage of Society *another way*; ſo no one ever pretended to prove the Being and Attributes of God, or the excellency of moral virtue, who had not *firſt* been taught the knowledge of God and moral virtue ſome *other way*.

Now if this is the ſtate of reaſon, as it is in man; if this is all the light that we have from our *own nature*, a *bare capacity* of receiving good or bad impreſſions, right or wrong opinions and ſentiments, accord-

ing to the ſtate of the world that we fall into; then we are but poorly furniſh'd, to aſſert and maintain the *abſolute perfection* of our own reaſon.

If our light is little more than the opinions and cuſtoms of thoſe amongſt whom we live, and it be ſo hard for a man to arrive at a greater wiſdom, than the common wiſdom of the *place* or *country* which gave him birth and education; how unreaſonably do we appeal to the perfection and ſufficiency of our own reaſon, againſt the *neceſſity* and *advantage* of divine revelation?

If we are *nothing* without the aſſiſtance of men; if we are a kind of fooliſh, helpleſs animals, till education and experience has *reveal'd* to us the wiſdom and knowledge of our fellow-creatures; ſhall we think our ſelves too wiſe, and full of our own light, to be farther enlighten'd with a knowledge and wiſdom reveal'd to us by God himſelf?

This gentleman, ſpeaking of education, ſaith, *Education is juſtly eſteem'd a ſecond nature; and its force is ſo ſtrong, that few can wholly ſhake off its prejudices, even in things unreaſonable and unnatural; and muſt it not have the greateſt efficacy in things agreeable to reaſon, and ſuitable to nature* *.

All that I ſhall add to this account is only this, That we are, by the circumſtances and condition of human life, *neceſſarily* ſubjected to this *ſecond nature*, and cannot avoid coming under its power.

* *Page* 166.

But

But here let me ask this pleader for the ſufficiency of the light of nature, how thoſe that reſign themſelves up to the light of their *own nature*, ſhall know whether it is their *firſt*, or their *ſecond* nature that directs them?

Here are, it ſeems, *two natures*; they may be as different as good and evil; yet as they are both *natures*, both *internal light*, how ſhall a man know which he follows? He does not know which was firſt, or why he ſhould call one firſt, and the other ſecond; they are both internal, and without any thing to diſtinguiſh them. And as he is not to *reſiſt* the motions of nature, or *ſtifle* its directions; ſo he muſt be as *obedient* to the directions of the *ſecond*, as of the firſt nature, becauſe he does not perceive their difference, nor has any means to diſtinguiſh their operations.

He therefore that aſſerts the light of nature to be a *ſufficient unerring* guide in divine matters, ought either to ſhew, that our *ſecond* nature is as *ſafe* a guide as the firſt; or that tho' it is nature, yet it has no *natural power* over us.

For ſince every man is *neceſſitated* to take upon him a *ſecond* nature, which he does not *know* to be a ſecond, or *when* it began, or *how far* it has proceeded, or how *contrary* it is to his firſt nature; he that would prove the light of nature to be ſo perfect, that nothing can be added to it, is oblig'd to

prove, that our ſecond nature, which we receive by education, has the *ſame degree* of perfection. For ſo far as our ſecond nature is *different* from the firſt, ſo far it has *chang'd* the firſt; and if we are to follow nature excluſive of revelation, we may take *revenge*, *ſelf-murder*, *incontinence*, *ſenſuality*, *pride*, *haughtineſs*, *ſelf-conceit*, and a *contempt* of all things *ſacred*, to be the true dictates and directions of nature.

For as it may be very eaſy, and I am afraid ſometimes happens to people to be thus educated; ſo if education is a *ſecond nature*, and nature is to be eſteemed a *true* and *perfect* guide; a man thus educated, has all his vices made ſo many glorious laws of nature; and through the ſtrength of his natural light, he condemns humility, ſelf-denial, and devotion, as fooliſh bigotry.

This writer ſays, *Natural religion*, that is, the religion of nature, *is a perpetual ſtanding rule for men of the meaneſt, as well as the higheſt capacities, and carries its own evidence with it, thoſe internal, inſeparable marks of truth* *. But if education is a *ſecond nature*, and, as this writer affirms, *has the force of a ſecond nature even in things unreaſonable and unnatural*; then this ſecond nature has not only its natural religion, which is alſo a *perpetual ſtanding rule for men of the meaneſt, as well as the higheſt capacities*; *which carries its own evidence with it*,

* Page 243.

it, thoſe internal, inſeparable marks of truth: But it may alſo have a natural religion, both *unreaſonable* and *unnatural*; ſince it is here affirm'd, that education has the force of nature even in things of this kind.

Again; If education has this force of nature even in things unreaſonable and unnatural, and ſtill greater force in things agreeable to nature; if it is alſo abſolutely neceſſary for all men to come under the power of *ſome ſecond* nature, what can be more vain or groundleſs, than to pretend to ſtate the *light* or *rectitude* of human nature, ſince it muſt be for the moſt part in every man, as the *uncertainty*, *variety*, *happineſs* or *unhappineſs* of education has render'd it?

And our author can no more tell, what man would be without human education, or what nature would do for thoſe who had no foreign inſtruction, than he can tell what ſort of beings dwell in the *moon*. And yet he that does not know this, how can he know the light of nature?

For if moſt of our judgments, opinions, tempers, and ways of thinking are owing to education, and the authority of that part of the world where we dwell; if theſe impreſſions have the power of a *ſecond nature* upon us, then the light of *nature* can no more be diſtinguiſh'd from the light of *education*, than the ſtrength which we have from *nature*, can be diſtinguiſh'd from the ſtrength which we have from our *food*.

So

So that to declare the light of nature ſo abſolutely perfect, as to be incapable of all improvement even by divine revelation, is no leſs an extravagance, than to declare the education of mankind to be abſolutely perfect in the *ſame degree*.

For if nature not only *wants*, but cannot poſſibly *avoid* education; if this *neceſſary*, *unavoidable* education becomes *another nature*, undiſcernible from the firſt; then nothing can poſſibly be affirm'd of the perfection of the light of nature, but what muſt be affirm'd in the *ſame degree* of the perfection of education. And he that affirms, that mankind have had, at *all times* and *all places* of the world, the *ſame ſufficient*, *perfect* light of nature, muſt affirm, that mankind have had, at all times and places of the world, the ſame *perfect*, *unerring* education.

When therefore it is juſt and fitting for all people to abide by the *abſolute perfection* of their *education*, the *infallible* light of their *ſecond nature*, as the unerring ſtandard, meaſure and rule of all that is to be eſteem'd *moral*, *religious*, and *divine*; then it may be juſt to appeal to the *natural light* of all men of all ages, and all places, as a *ſufficient teacher* of all that ought, or ought not to be a matter of religion.

For till it can be ſhewn, that men are not liable to a *ſecond nature* from education, or that there is, or can be any nature without

out it; the ſtate of nature muſt differ all over the world, and in every age of the world, juſt as the light and advantages of education have differ'd in the ſeveral parts and ages of the world.

In a word, the religious and moral light of our *firſt Nature* is juſt as great as the *firſt ſtrength* of infants; and the religious and moral light of our *ſecond nature* is juſt as perfect as our *education*, and as much of our own growth as the firſt language that we are taught to ſpeak.

May one not therefore juſtly wonder, what it is that could lead any people into an imagination of the abſolute perfection of *human reaſon?* There ſeems no more in the ſtate of mankind to betray a man into this fancy, than to perſuade him that the reaſon of *infants* is abſolutely perfect. For ſenſe and experience are as full and ſtrong a proof againſt one, as againſt the other.

But it muſt be ſaid for theſe writers, that they decline all arguments from facts and experience, to give a better account of human nature; but with the ſame juſtice, as if a man was to lay aſide the authority of *hiſtory*, to give you a truer account of the life of *Alexander*.

They argue about the perfection of human reaſon, not as if it were ſomething *already* in being, that had its *nature* and *condition*, and ſhow'd itſelf to be what it is; but as if it were ſomething that might take

its

its ſtate and condition, according to their fancies and ſpeculations about it.

Their objection againſt revelation is founded upon the pretended ſufficiency, and abſolute perfection, of the light and ſtrength of human reaſon, to teach all men all that is wiſe, and holy, and divine, in religion. But how do they prove this perfection of human reaſon? Do they appeal to mankind as proofs of this perfection? Do they produce any body of men, in this, or any other age of the world, that without any aſſiſtance from revelation have attained to this perfection of religious knowledge? This is not ſo much as pretended to: The hiſtory of ſuch men is entirely wanting. And yet the want of ſuch a fact as this, has even the force of demonſtration againſt this pretended ſufficiency of natural reaſon.

Becauſe it is a matter not capable of any other kind of proof, but muſt be admitted as certainly true, or rejected as certainly falſe, according as fact and experience bear witneſs for or againſt it.

For an enquiry about the light, and ſtrength, and ſufficiency of reaſon to guide and preſerve men in the knowledge and practice of true religion, is a queſtion, as *ſolely* to be reſolved by *fact and experience*, as if the enquiry was about the *ſhape* of man's body, or the *number* of his ſenſes. And to talk of a light and ſtrength of reaſon,

ſon, natural to man, which fact and experience have never yet proved, is as egregious nonſenſe, as to talk of natural ſenſes, or faculties of his body, which fact and experience have never yet diſcovered.

For as the *exiſtence* of man cannot be proved, but from fact and experience; ſo every *quality* of man, whether of body or mind, and every degree of that quality, can only be proved by fact and experience.

The degrees of human *ſtrength*, the nature of human *paſſions*; the duration of human *life*, the light and ſtrength of human *reaſon* in matters of religion, are things not poſſible to be known in any *other degree*, than *ſo far* as fact and experience prove them.

From the bare conſideration of a rational ſoul in union with a body, and bodily paſſions, we can neither prove man to be *ſtrong* or *weak*, *good* or *bad*, *ſickly* or *ſound*, *mortal* or *immortal*: all theſe qualities muſt diſcover themſelves, as the *eye* diſcovers its degree of *ſight*, the *hand* its degree of *ſtrength*, &c.

To enquire therefore, whether men have by nature, light and ſtrength ſufficient to guide, and keep them in the true religion? is the ſame appeal to fact and experience, as to enquire, whether men are *mortal*, *ſickly*, or *ſound*; or how far they can *ſee* and *hear*. For nothing that relates to human nature,

as a quality of it, can poſſibly have any other proof.

As therefore theſe Gentlemen are, in this debate, without any proof, or even pretence of proof, from fact and experience, ſo their cauſe ought to be look'd upon to be as vain and romantick, as if they had aſſerted, that men have ſenſes naturally fitted to hear ſounds, and ſee objects at all diſtances, tho' fact and experience, the only means of knowing it, if it was ſo, has, from the creation to this time, proved the quite contrary.

For he that aſſerts the ſufficiency of the light and ſtrength of reaſon, to guide men in matters of religion, is not only without any poſitive proof from fact or experience on his ſide, but has the hiſtory of all ages, for near ſix thouſand years paſt, fully demonſtrating the quite contrary.

If ſome other enquirers into human nature, ſhould affirm, that there is in mankind a *natural inſtinct* of mutual love, *ſufficient* to make every man, at all times, love every other man, with the *ſame degree* of affection as he loves himſelf; I ſuppoſe ſuch an opinion would be thought too abſurd and extravagant, to need any confutation. And yet all the abſurdity of it would lie in this, that it affirmed ſomething of the *ſufficiency* of a natural quality in man, which could not be ſupported by a ſingle inſtance of any one man, and was contrary

to

to the experience and hiſtory of every age of the world.

Now this is exactly the caſe of theſe gentlemen: their opinion has neither more nor leſs abſurdity in it: they only affirm ſuch a ſufficiency of light and reaſon to be natural to all men, as cannot be ſupported by a ſingle inſtance of any one man that ever lived, and is fully contradicted by the experience and hiſtory of every age ſince the creation of the world.

By what has been here ſaid, I hope the reader will obſerve, that this enquiry about the perfection or imperfection, the ſtrength or weakneſs, of reaſon in man, as to matters of religion, reſts *wholly* upon fact and experience; and that therefore all ſpeculative reaſonings upon it are to be look'd upon as idle and viſionary as a ſick man's dreams about health; and as wholly to be rejected, as any ſpeculative arguments that ſhould pretend to prove, in ſpite of all facts and experience, the *immortality*, and *unalterable* ſtate of human bodies.

Our author himſelf ſeems very ſenſible, that the argument drawn from facts and experience preſſed hard upon his cauſe; and therefore has given the beſt anſwer to it he can yet think of.

It can't, ſays he, *be imputed to any defect in the light of nature, that the* Pagan *world ran into idolatry; but to their being entirely governed by prieſts, who pretended communi-*

cation with their Gods, and to have thence their revelations, which they impoſed on the credulous, as divine oracles.

The truth and juſtneſs of this aſſertion, will fully appear by the following illuſtration.

" It cannot be imputed to any defect in " the health and ſoundneſs of man's natu- " ral conſtitution, that the world has, in " all ages, been over-run with diſeaſes and " diſtempers; but to their being entirely " governed by phyſicians, who pretended " to I know not what ſecret knowledge of " medicines, which they impoſed on the " ſickly, as infallible remedies.

For, as a perfect ſtate of health, conſcious to itſelf of a ſufficiency of natural ſtrength to keep clear of all diſeaſes, ſeems to be out of all danger from phyſicians; ſo had mankind been ever conſcious to themſelves of a ſufficient natural knowledge of what is true or falſe in religion; or, as this author ſaith, ſuch *as enabled men of the meaneſt capacity to diſtinguiſh between religion and ſuperſtition,** what *room* had there been for frauds and impoſtures in religion?

If a man, whoſe buſineſs it was to provide himſelf with a quantity of *pure gold*, ſhould be continually buying *Lead*, and *braſs*, and *iron*, inſtead of it; would you ſay, that his falling into ſuch miſtakes was not to be imputed to any *defect* in his know-

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ledge

ledge of *pure gold*, or how to diſtinguiſh it from other metals; but to the *lyes* and *affirmations* of thoſe who told him, that ſuch lead, and braſs, and iron, were pure gold?

Farther; This author ſaith, the world did not run into idolatry thro' any defect in the light of nature, but becauſe they were *credulous*.

Now credulity, *ſo far* as it goes in any matter, ſuppoſes an *equal degree* of ignorance in that matter, whatever it is. No man is credulous of falſe accounts, or fabulous relations, where he knows the truth.

Children are exceeding *credulous*, becauſe they are exceeding *ignorant*; and in the ſame degree as their knowledge increaſes, their credulity abates. So that to ſay, men ran into idolatry, not thro' want of light, or ignorance of what is true and falſe in religion, but becauſe they were *credulous*; is as nice a diſtinction, as if it ſhould be ſaid, that children believe any fable that you can tell them, not becauſe they are *ignorant* of what is true or falſe, but becauſe they are *credulous*.

Or as it may be ſaid, in another matter, with the ſame juſtneſs of thought, that ſuch an *army* ran away from the enemy, not thro' any defect in *natural courage*, but becauſe they were *affrighted*.

For men may as juſtly be ſaid to have a perfect courage, and yet be govern'd by their fears, as to have perfect knowledge of that

that which is true in religion, and yet be credulous of that which is falſe.

This *Anti-paſtor*, in his *ſecond Addreſs*, ſays, *Can the ſuperſtition of the Pagans be imputed to any defect, or inſufficienty in the light of reaſon, when it was wholly owing to their abandoning that divine light; and, in defiance of it, running into ſenſeleſs traditions?* *

But how came it, that they ran into ſenſeleſs traditions? What was it that admitted theſe traditions, as juſt and good? Why, it was that faculty which judges of every thing, and which this writer recommends as an unerring guide. And to ſay, a man's ſuperſtition is not owing to any defect or weakneſs of his reaſon, but to his admitting ſenſeleſs traditions, is as vain an obſervation, as to ſay, a man's falſe reaſoning is not owing to any weakneſs of his reaſon, but to his admitting and proceeding upon fooliſh and abſurd arguments.

For, fooliſh and abſurd arguments don't more ſhew the ſtate of his reaſon, who proceeds upon them, than ſenſeleſs traditions ſhew the ſtate of his reaſon, who admits them: For they are as much the objects of his reaſon, as arguments; and all that is ſenſeleſs and abſurd in either of them, muſt either be charged equally upon the reaſon of him that admits them, or both equally removed from it. So that if ſenſeleſs traditions are not a proof of the weakneſs of

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their

their reaſon that approve of them, neither are fooliſh and abſurd arguments a proof of the weakneſs of their reaſon, who proceed upon them.

Again: Suppoſing, as he ſaith, that the *Pagans, in defiance of their reaſon*, received ſuch traditions: Does this do any credit to the light of reaſon? For how can a man renounce his reaſon, but by an act of his reaſon? For if any thing could lay aſide reaſon, but itſelf, then there would be ſomething ſuperior to reaſon in human nature.

But, is it not as great a reproach to reaſon, to renounce itſelf, as to credit a falſe tradition? For a *reaſon* that can, *knowingly*, lay aſide itſelf, is in a more defective and diſordered ſtate, than a reaſon that is only capable of being deluded. But if reaſon, in this caſe, lays aſide itſelf, *without* knowing it, then, I ſuppoſe, ſuch an *accident* may be fairly attributed to ſome weakneſs and defect of reaſon.

He proceeds thus: *'Tis certainly no good argument againſt the ſufficiency of the divine light of nature, that men could not err, except they left it, and followed vain traditions.**

This obſervation has juſt the ſame ſenſe and acuteneſs in it, as if it had been ſaid, *It is certainly no good argument againſt* the ſufficiency of the divine healthfulneſs of *human nature, that men could not be* ſickly, *except they left it*, and *fell into various diſtem-*

* *Second* Addreſs, *p.* 39.

pers:

pers: Or, againſt the ſufficiency of the divine ſtrength of *natural courage, that men could not* be timorous, *till they* left it, and followed *vain fears.* For, to prove that reaſon is ſufficient, becauſe every thing that is abſurd, is contrary to reaſon, is like proving our healthfulneſs to be ſufficient, becauſe all diſtempers are contrary to it; or our courage to be ſufficient, becauſe fears and cowardice are contrary to it.

Beſides, How is it that men *leave* their reaſon? Why, juſt as *ignorant* men leave their *knowledge*; as *dull* people leave their *wit*, or *cowards* leave their *courage.* The firſt part of this paragraph tells you of a *ſufficiency of the divine light of nature:* Well; what has this divine light of nature done? what ſufficient effects has it had? Why, it has cover'd all the world with darkneſs. For, as a proof of the ſufficiency of this divine light, he adds, in the very next words, *Whoever conſiders how all mankind, even the wiſeſt nations, have been impoſed on by ſenſeleſs tales, and idle ſtories, conſecrated by length of time*; well, what then? what ſhould he conclude from this conſideration? Ought he not to conclude, that the *reaſon* of the wiſeſt men of all nations, runs very low in matters of religion? This is the only concluſion that common ſenſe can draw from ſuch an obſervation: But, our author ſays, *Whoever conſiders this, will not be very fond*

fond of relying upon tradition in matters of religion.

As if he had ſaid, Whoever conſiders how all mankind, even the wiſeſt of men, have been impos'd upon by abſurd arguments, will not be very fond of relying upon arguments. For idle tales, and ſenſleſs traditions in matters of religion, impoſe upon men in no other manner, than falſe arguments, and abſurd concluſions, impoſe upon them. And as it is their own reaſon, that gives the ſtrength and appearance of truth to a ſenſleſs argument; ſo it is their own reaſon that gives the credibility and appearance of truth to ſenſleſs traditions.

And to lay the fault upon tradition, and not upon reaſon that approves it, is as juſt, as to lay the fault upon an abominable argument, and not upon reaſon, that proceeds upon it.

Again; Suppoſing that *all mankind*, *even the wiſeſt nations*, have for this ſix thouſand years been thus impos'd upon, not knowing how to diſtinguiſh idle tales and ſenſleſs traditions from true religion; is not this a noble foundation for this writer to build the *ſufficiency of the divine light of nature upon?* For ſuppoſing it had been in the greateſt degree *inſufficient*, what other effect could have follow'd from it, but only this, that *all mankind*, even the *wiſeſt nations*, ſhould have been over-run with error? And is it not ſtrange, that effects ſhould bear no pro-

portion to their cauſes; that the ſame things ſhould follow from the *ſufficiency* of the divine light of nature, which muſt have follow'd from its *greateſt imperfection* and *inſufficiency?*

And muſt not the enemies of *reaſon* and *free-thinking* be forc'd to confeſs, that this writer hath choſen an excellent guide for himſelf; ſince he ſo fully acknowledges, that no one yet has been rightly guided by it? Muſt not his preſent undertaking be granted to be the effect of cool and ſober deliberation, ſince it only calls people of *all*, even the *meaneſt capacities*, to ſuch an uſe of their reaſon, as the wiſeſt of men and nations have always been ſtrangers to?

Again; It is pretended, that the abſurdities of the Pagan world are not owing to any defect of reaſon, but to their *undue uſe* of reaſon. The Biſhop of *London* very juſtly obſerves, that ſuch a pretence is *begging the queſtion*. Our author thinks not. I will therefore grant, that it was thro' an *undue uſe* of their reaſon. For granting that mankind fell into all thoſe abſurdities by an undue uſe of their reaſon, the charge againſt reaſon is rather increas'd than abated. For an undue uſe of it is as great an accuſation of reaſon, as any *weakneſs* or *blindneſs* that can be attributed to it. For to diſtinguiſh betwixt the defect of reaſon, and the undue uſe of reaſon, is as ſolid, as to diſtinguiſh betwixt the perfection of reaſon, and a due

uſe

uſe of reaſon. For is not a due uſe of reaſon, ſo far as it proceeds, a certain ſign of its perfection? Muſt not therefore the *undue* uſe of reaſon, ſo far as it proceeds, be an equally certain ſign of its imperfection?

For what can make an undue uſe of reaſon, but itſelf? And if reaſon is ſo univerſally liable to an *undue uſe* of itſelf, that the univerſal ignorance and corruption of mankind is to be aſcrib'd to it, then this undue uſe of reaſon is as great a ſign of its univerſal weakneſs and imperfection, as any thing elſe can be.

This *undue uſe* of reaſon is either voluntary and known, or involuntary and unknown. If it is the latter, then it reſolves itſelf into that natural weakneſs and infirmity, which his Lordſhip has ſo fully proved to belong to human reaſon. If it is the former, then it may juſtly be reckon'd a *greater diſorder*, and ſuch as makes reaſon more unfit to be a guide, than all the weakneſs, blindneſs, and corruption, which his Lordſhip hath accus'd it of.

CHAP. V.

Shewing, that all the mutability *of our tempers, the* diſorders *of our paſſions, the* corruption *of our hearts, all the* reveries *of the imagination, all the* contradictions *and* abſurdities *that are to be found in human life, and human opinions, are ſtrictly and preciſely the mutability, diſorders, corruption, and abſurdities of* human reaſon.

IT is the intent of this chapter to ſhew, that altho' common language aſcribes a variety of faculties and principles to the ſoul, imputing this action to the blindneſs of our *paſſions*, that to the inconſtancy of our *tempers*; one thing to the heat of our *imagination*, another to the coolneſs of our *reaſon*; yet in ſtrictneſs of truth, every thing that is done by us is the action and operation of our reaſon, and is to be aſcrib'd to it, as the ſole faculty or principle from whence it proceeded, and by which it is govern'd and effected.

This

This writer takes a great deal of pains to prove by *long quotations*, what no body denies, that there is a *law* or *light* of reaſon common to men. All this is as freely granted, as that *love* and *hatred*, *feeling* and *ſenſation* are common to men; and is granting no more, than that men are by nature intelligent and rational beings. For the faculties of man, as he is an intelligent being, as neceſſarily perceive ſome difference in actions, as to *good* and *bad*, as they perceive ſome things they like, and ſome things they diſlike. In this ſenſe there is a law or light of reaſon common to all men; and the law of reaſon is in men, as the law of *thinking*, of *liking*, and *diſliking* is in men.

And the different degrees of reaſon are in men, as the different degrees of love and averſion; as the different degrees of wit, parts, good nature, or ill nature, are in man.

And as all men have naturally more or leſs of theſe qualities, ſo all men have naturally more or leſs of reaſon: And the bulk of mankind are as different in reaſon, as they are in theſe qualities.

As love is the ſame paſſion in all men, yet is infinitely different; as hatred is the ſame paſſion in all men, yet with infinite differences; ſo reaſon is the ſame faculty in all men, yet with infinite differences.

And as our paſſions not only make us different from other men, but frequently

and

and almoſt daily different from ourſelves, loving and hating under great inconſtancy; ſo our reaſon is not only different from the reaſon of other men, but is often different from it ſelf by a ſtrange inconſtancy, ſetting up firſt one opinion, and then another.

So that when we talk of *human reaſon*, or a reaſon *common* to mankind, we talk of as *various*, *uncertain*, and *unmeaſurable* a thing, as when we talk of a *love*, a *liking*, an *averſion*, a *good nature* or *ill nature*, common to mankind; for theſe qualities admit of no variation, uncertainty, or mutability, but ſuch as they directly receive from the *reaſon* of mankind.

For it is as much the reaſon of man that acts in all theſe tempers, and makes them to be juſt what they are, as it is the reaſon of man that demonſtrates a mathematical propoſition.

Was our reaſon ſteady, and of one kind, there would be juſt the ſame ſteadineſs and regularity in our tempers; did not reaſon fall into miſtakes, follies and abſurdities, we ſhould have nothing fooliſh or abſurd in our love or averſion. For every humour, every kind of love or averſion, is as ſtrictly the *action* or *operation* of our reaſon, as judgment is the act of our reaſon.

And the tempers and paſſions of a child differ only from the tempers and paſſions of a man, exactly in the ſame degree, as the reaſon of a child differs from the reaſon of man.

So

So that our paſſions and tempers are the natural actions and real effects of our reaſon, and have no qualities, either good or bad, but ſuch as are to be imputed to it.

A laudable good nature, or a laudable averſion, is only reaſon acting in a *certain manner*; a criminal good nature, or a criminal averſion, is nothing elſe but an ill-judging reaſon; that is, reaſon acting in another certain manner.

But ſtill 'tis reaſon, or our underſtanding, that is the *only agent* in our bad paſſions, as well as good paſſions; and as much the *ſole agent* in all our paſſions and tempers, as in things of mere ſpeculation.

So that the ſtate of reaſon in human life, is nothing elſe but the ſtate of human tempers and paſſions: And right reaſon in morality, is nothing elſe but right love and right averſion.

And all our tempers and ways of liking and diſliking, are as much the acts and operations of our reaſon, as the wiſeſt actions of our life; and they only differ from reaſon, as reaſon differs from itſelf, when it judges rightly, and when it judges erroneouſly.

All that therefore which we commonly call the weakneſs, blindneſs, and diſorder of our *paſſions*, is in reality the weakneſs, blindneſs, and diſorder of our *reaſon*. For a right love, or wrong love, denotes only our reaſon acting in a *certain*, *particular* manner.

So

So that if any thing can be ſaid preciſely, or with exactneſs, of love, averſion, good nature or ill nature, as common to mankind; the ſame may be ſaid of reaſon, as common to mankind.

And if it would be very fooliſh and abſurd, to aſcribe an abſolute perfection to human love, making it alone a ſufficient guide to all good, or an abſolute perfection to human hatred, as a ſufficient preſervative from all vice; it is equally abſurd to aſcribe the ſame perfection to human reaſon, becauſe neither love nor hatred have any thing perfect or imperfect, good or bad in them, but what is ſolely the action and operation of reaſon.

For the diſtinction of our reaſon from our Paſſions, is only a diſtinction in language, made at pleaſure; and is no more real in the things themſelves, than the *deſire* and *inclination* are really different from the *will*. All therefore that is weak and fooliſh in our paſſions, is the weakneſs and folly of our reaſon; all the inconſtancy and caprice of our humours and tempers, is the caprice and inconſtancy of our reaſon.

It is not *flattery* that compliments vice in authority; it is not *corruption* that makes men proſtitute their honour; 'tis not *ſenſuality* that plunges men into *debauchery*; 'tis not *avarice* that makes men ſordid; 'tis not *ambition* that makes them reſtleſs; 'tis not *bribery* that makes men ſell their conſciences;

ſciences; 'tis not *intereſt* that makes them lye, and cheat, and perjure themſelves. What is it therefore? Why, it is that *abſolutely perfect* faculty, which our author ſets up as the *unerring* ſtandard of all that is *wiſe*, *holy* and *good*; 'tis in his ſtrong language, *reaſon*, the *uſe of reaſon*, *human reaſon*, that does all this.

For whether any thing be fit to be done, 'tis, as he ſays, *reaſon alone which muſt judge*; *as the eye is the ſole judge of what is viſible, the ear of what is audible, ſo reaſon of what is reaſonable.*

Every thing therefore that is done, every thing that is choſen or preferr'd in human life before any thing elſe, is as ſtrictly done, or choſen by reaſon, as every thing that is ſeen, is ſeen by the eye; and every thing that is heard, is heard by the ear.

To ſuppoſe that reaſon permits itſelf to be govern'd by paſſions or tempers, but is not the *immediate*, *full agent* of all that is done by them, is as abſurd, as to ſuppoſe that reaſon permits itſelf to be govern'd by the *hand* when it is writing falſly, or the *tongue* when it is talking prophanely, but is not the immediate, direct agent of all that is written and ſpoken by them.

Brutes are incapable of imprudence and immorality, becauſe none of their actions are the actions of *reaſon*: Every thing therefore that is imprudence, immorality, baſe-

neſs, or villany in us, muſt be the act of our reaſon; otherwiſe it could no more be imprudent or immoral, than the actions of brutes.

If therefore, as this author often ſaith, reaſon be the only faculty that diſtinguiſheth us from brutes; it neceſſarily follows, that thoſe irregularities, whether of humour, paſſions, or tempers, which cannot be imputed to brutes, muſt be ſolely attributed to that faculty by which we are diſtinguiſh'd from brutes; and conſequently every thing that is fooliſh, vain, ſhameful, falſe, treacherous and baſe, muſt be the ſole expreſs acts of our reaſon; ſince if they were the acts of any thing elſe, they could have no more vanity, falſeneſs or baſeneſs, than hunger and thirſt.

As therefore all that is faithful, juſt and wiſe, can only be attributed to that which is done by our reaſon; ſo by plain conſequence, all that is vain, falſe, or ſhameful, can only be imputed to any acts, as they are the acts of reaſon.

It is not my intent in the leaſt to cenſure or condemn our common language, which conſiders and talks of reaſon and the paſſions, as if they were as different as a *governor* and his *ſubjects*.

Theſe forms of ſpeech are very intelligible and uſeful, and give great life and ornament to all diſcourſes upon morality; and are even

even neceſſary both for the Hiſtorian, the Poet, and the Orator.

But when certain perſons aſcribe to human reaſon, as a *diſtinct faculty* of human nature, I know not what *abſolute perfection*, making it as immutable, and incapable of any addition or improvement, as God himſelf; it is neceſſary to conſider human reaſon, and human nature, not as it is repreſented in common language, but as it is in reality in itſelf.

Notwithſtanding therefore in common language, our paſſions and the effects of them, are very uſefully diſtinguiſh'd from our reaſon, I have here vertured to ſhew, that all the diſorders of human nature, are preciſely the diſorders of human reaſon, and that all the perfection or imperfection of our paſſions, is nothing elſe but the perfection or imperfection of our reaſon.

And we may as well think, that judgment, prudence, diſcretion, are things different from our reaſon, as that humour, temper, approbation or averſion, are really different from our reaſon.

For, as it is a right exerciſe of reaſon, that denominates its actions to be *prudence*, *judgment*, and *diſcretion*; ſo it is a wrong exerciſe of reaſon that denominates its actions to be *humour*, *temper*, and *caprice*.

And it would be as abſurd to condemn humour and caprice, if they were not the actions and operations of reaſon, as to com-

mend a prudence and diſcretion that were the effects of an irrational principle.

Our follies therefore, and abſurdities of every kind, are as neceſſarily to be aſcrib'd to our reaſon, as the *firſt*, *immediate*, and *ſole* cauſe of them, as our wiſdom and diſcretion are to be aſcrib'd to it in that degree.

The difference betwixt reaſon aſſenting to the properties of a *ſquare*, and reaſon acting in motions of deſire or averſion, is only this, that in the latter caſe it is reaſon acting under a ſenſe of *good* or *evil*, in the former caſe it is reaſon acting under a ſenſe of *magnitude*.

And as the relations of magnitude, as they are the objects of our reaſon, are only the objects of its *aſſent* or *diſſent*; ſo good and evil, as they are objects of our reaſon, are only the objects of its *deſire* or *averſion*: and as the aſſent or diſſent, in matters of ſpeculation, whether right or wrong, is ſolely the act of our reaſon; ſo deſire or averſion, in human life, whether right or wrong, is equally the act of our reaſon.

All the good therefore that there is in any of our deſires or averſions, is the good of our reaſon; and all the evil or blindneſs that there is in any of our paſſions, is ſolely the evil and blindneſs of our reaſon.

Becauſe love, deſire, averſion, denote nothing elſe but our reaſon acting in a certain manner; juſt as prudence, diſcretion, and judgment,

judgment, denote nothing elſe but our reaſon acting in a certain manner.

We often ſay, that our paſſions deceive us, or perſuade us; but this is no more ſtrictly ſo, than when we ſay, our *intereſt* deceived, or a *bribe* blinded us. For bribes and intereſt are not active principles, or have any power of deception; 'tis only our reaſon that gives them a falſe value, and prefers them to a greater good.

'Tis juſt ſo in what we call the deceit of our paſſions: they meddle with us no more than bribes meddle with us; but that pleaſurable perception, which is to be found in certain enjoyments, is by our reaſon preferr'd to that better good, which we might expect from a ſelf-denial.

We ſay again, that our paſſions paint things in falſe colours, and preſent to our minds vain appearances of happineſs.

But this is no more ſtrictly true, than when we ſay, our *imagination* forms caſtles in the air. For the imagination ſignifies no diſtinct faculty from our reaſon, but only reaſon acting upon our *own ideas*.

So when our paſſions are ſaid to give falſe colours to things, or preſent vain appearances of happineſs, it is only our reaſon acting upon its own ideas of *good* and *evil*, juſt as it acts upon its own ideas of *architecture*, in forming caſtles in the air.

So that all that which we call different faculties of the ſoul, tempers and paſſions

of

of the heart, ſtrictly ſpeaking, means nothing elſe but the various acts and operations of one and the ſame rational principle, which has different names, according to the objects that it acts upon, and the manner of its acting.

In ſome things it is called ſpeculative, in others it is called practical reaſon. And we may as juſtly think our ſpeculative reaſon is a different faculty from our practical reaſon, as that our tempers, averſions, or likings, are not as fully and ſolely to be aſcrib'd to our reaſon, as ſyllogiſms and demonſtrations.

For, as 'tis our reaſon alone that chuſes the true good, ſo 'tis our reaſon alone that chuſes the falſe good: as 'tis reaſon alone that is the agent when purity and integrity are preferr'd to ſenſual pleaſure, and ſecular advantage; ſo 'tis our reaſon alone that is the agent when ſenſual pleaſure, and ſecular advantage, are peferr'd to purity and integrity.

For the ſame principle that is the agent of all that is good in us, muſt be equally the agent of all that is evil.

All virtue is nothing elſe but reaſon acting in a certain manner; and all vice is nothing elſe but reaſon acting in a certain contrary manner. All the difference is in the actions, and none at all in the agent.

And to ſay, that reaſon acts in our virtues, and paſſion acts in our vices, is as abſurd, as to ſay the contrary, that paſſion is the

the agent in our virtues, and reaſon the agent in our vices. For the action and power of reaſon is as much required to make any thing vicious, as to make any thing virtuous.

Every thing therefore that is choſen, whether it be good or bad, is the expreſs act and operation of reaſon.

Reaſon therefore is certainly the worſt, as well as the beſt faculty that we have: as it is the only principle of virtue, ſo it is, as certainly, the ſole cauſe of all that is baſe, horrid, and ſhameful in human life. As it alone can diſcover truth, ſo it alone leads us into the groſſeſt errors.

It was as truly reaſon that made *Medea* kill her children, that made *Cato* kill himſelf, that made pagans offer human ſacrifices to idols; that made *Epicurus* deny a providence, *Mahomet* pretend a revelation; that made ſome men ſcepticks, others bigots; ſome enthuſiaſts, others profane; that made *Hobbes* aſſert all religion to be human invention, and *Spinoſa* to declare trees, and ſtones, and animals, to be parts of God; that makes free-thinkers deny freedom of will, and fataliſts exhort to a reformation of manners; that made *Vaux* a conſpirator, and *Ludlow* a Regicide; that made *Muggleton* a fanatick, and *Rocheſter* a Libertine: It was as truly human reaſon that did all theſe things, as it is human reaſon that demonſtrates mathematical propoſitions.

For

For as all miſtakes in ſpeculation are as much the acts and operation of reaſon, as true concluſions; ſo all errors in duty, whether civil or religious, are as much the acts of our reaſon, as the exerciſe of the moſt ſolid virtues.

Medea and *Cato* acted as truly according to the judgment of their reaſon at that time, as the *confeſſor* that chuſes rather to ſuffer, than deny his faith.

And the difference betwixt them does not conſiſt in this, that one power or faculty of the mind acted in one of them, and another faculty or power of the mind acted in another; that is, that reaſon acted in one, and paſſion in another; but purely in the different ſtate of their reaſon. For had not *Medea* and *Cato* thought it beſt to do what they did, at the time they did it, they would no more have done it, than the *confeſſor* would chuſe to ſuffer rather than deny his faith, unleſs he had judg'd it beſt ſo to do.

It may indeed be well enough ſaid in common language, that paſſion made *Medea* and *Cato* to do as they did, juſt as it may be ſaid of a man that affirms a *plenum*, or holds any ſpeculative abſurdity, that it is blindneſs or prejudice that keeps him in it. Not as if blindneſs or prejudice were powers or faculties of his mind, but as they ſignify the *ill ſtate* of his reaſon. Juſt ſo the paſſions may be ſaid to govern men in their

their actions; not as if they were powers of the mind, but as they denote the diſorder'd ſtate of reaſon. And whenever any thing is imputed to the ſtrength and violence of our paſſions, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it only means the weakneſs and low condition of our reaſon at that time.

For reaſon governs as fully when our actions and tempers are ever ſo bad, as it does when our actions and tempers are ſound and good. And the only difference is, that reaſon acting well governs in the one caſe, and reaſon acting ill governs in the other.

Juſt as it is the ſame reaſon that ſometimes judges ſtrictly right, which at other times judges exceeding wrong, in matters of ſpeculation.

When therefore we ſay, that reaſon governs the paſſions, it means no more, in ſtrict truth, than that reaſon governs itſelf; that it acts with deliberation and attention, does not yeild to its firſt judgments or opinions, but uſes ſecond, and third thoughts.

So that guarding againſt the paſſions, is only guarding againſt its own firſt judgments and opinions; that is, guarding againſt itſelf.

To all this it may, perhaps, be objected, that our paſſions and tempers ariſe from bodily motions, and depend very much upon the ſtate of our blood and animal ſpirits, and that therefore what we do under their

commotions, cannot be attributed to our reaſon.

It is readily granted, that the body has this ſhare in our paſſions and tempers: but then the ſame thing muſt be granted of the body, in all the acts and operations of the mind. So that if our deſires and averſions cannot be imputed to our reaſon, as its acts, becauſe of the joint operation of the animal ſpirits in them; no more can ſyllogiſms and demonſtrations be attributed to our reaſon, as its operations, becauſe the operation of bodily ſpirits concurreth in the forming of them.

For the moſt abſtract thought, and calm ſpeculation of the mind, has as truly the *concurrence*, and *conjunct* operation of bodily ſpirits, as our ſtrongeſt deſires or averſions. And it is as much owing to the ſtate of the body that ſuch ſpeculations are what they are, as it is owing to the ſtate of the body that ſuch paſſions are what they are.

For the motions of the bodily ſpirits are inſeparable from, and according to, the ſtate and action of the mind: when reaſon is in ſpeculation of a trifle, they concur but *weakly*; when reaſon ſpeculates intenſely, their operation is *increaſed*. And ſometimes the attention of the mind is ſo great, and has ſo engag'd and called in all the animal ſpirits to its aſſiſtanee, that the operations of our ſenſes are ſuſpended, and we neither ſee nor feel, till the attention of the mind has

has let the ſpirits return to all the parts of the body.

Now will any one ſay, that theſe intenſe thoughts are leſs the acts of the mind, becauſe they have a greater concurrence of bodily ſpirits than when it is acting with indifference, and ſo has a leſſer quantity of bodily ſpirits?

Yet this might as well be ſaid, as to ſay, that the aſſent or diſſent, in ſpeculation, is the act of our reaſon; but liking or diſliking, loving or hating, are not ſo the acts of our reaſon, becauſe they have a greater concurrence, and different motions of bodily ſpirits.

For, as the mind is in a different ſtate when it deſires good, or fears evil, from what it is when it only compares two triangles; ſo the motions or concurrence of the bodily ſpirits have only *ſuch* a difference as is ſtrictly *correſpondent* to theſe two ſtates of the mind. They act and join as much in comparing the triangles, as in the deſire of good, or fear of evil. And the mind is juſt ſo much governed by the body, in its paſſions, as it is governed by it in its calmeſt contemplations.

For as the gentle quiet operation of the animal ſpirits is then ſtrictly correſpondent, and entirely owing to the ſtate and action of the mind; ſo in all our paſſions the ſtrong and increaſed motion of the animal ſpirits is then ſtrictly correſpondent, and entirely owing to the ſtate and action of the mind.

So that reaſon is neither more nor leſs the agent in all our tempers and paſſions, than it is in our moſt dry and ſedate ſpeculations.

It may, and often does happen, that a man may have as great an eagerneſs and impatience in the ſolving a mathematical problem, as another hath to obtain any great good, or avoid any great evil.

But may it therefore be ſaid, that it is not reaſon that ſolves, or deſires to ſolve, the problem, becauſe the bodily ſpirits are ſo active in it?

In a word; if our paſſions and tempers might not be imputed to our reaſon, as its own genuine acts and operations, becauſe they have ſuch a concurrence of bodily ſpirits, neither could arguing, or reaſoning, be attributed to our *reaſon*, as its proper act and operation, becauſe in all argumentation the bodily ſpirits are neceſſarily employ'd; and the better and cloſer the reaſoning is, the more they are excited and employ'd.

If it ſhould farther be objected, that reaſon is only *right reaſon*, and therefore cannot be ſaid to act or operate, but where, and ſo far, as right reaſon acts.

This is as abſurd as to ſay, that *love* ſignifies only *pure love*, and *hatred* juſt hatred; and that therefore a man cannot be ſaid to love or hate, but when, and ſo far, as his love is pure, and his hatred juſt.

To draw now ſome plain conſequences from the foregoing account.

Firſt,

First, If reaſon be, as above repreſented, the *univerſal agent*; if all the difference amongſt men, either in ſpeculation or practice, is only ſuch a difference as reaſon makes, then nothing can be more extravagant, than to affirm any thing concerning the degree of perfection or imperfection of reaſon, as common to man. It is as wild and romantick, as to pretend to ſtate the meaſure of folly and wiſdom, of fear and courage, of pride and humility, of good humour and ill humour, common to mankind: For as theſe ſtates of the mind are only ſo many different ſtates of reaſon; ſo no uncertainty belongs to them, but what in the *ſame degree* belongs to *reaſon*.

Secondly, Granting that all matters of religion muſt be agreeable to *right*, *unprejudic'd* reaſon; yet this could be no grounds for receiving nothing in religion, but what *human* reaſon could prove to be neceſſary; for *human* reaſon is no more *right unprejudic'd* reaſon, than a ſinner is *ſinleſs*, or a man an *angel*.

Granting again, that a man may go a great way towards rectifying his reaſon, and laying aſide its prejudices; yet no particular man can be a *better judge* of the rectitude of his *own reaſon*, than he is of the rectitude of his own *ſelf-love*, the ſagacity of his own *underſtanding*, the brightneſs of his own *parts*, the juſtneſs of his own *eloquence*, and the depth of his own *judgment*.

For

For there is nothing to deceive him in *ſelf-love*, in the opinion of his *own merit*, *wit*, *judgment* and *eloquence*, but what has the ſame power to deceive him, in the opinion of his own reaſon. And if, as our author ſays, *it be the fate of moſt ſects to be fondeſt of their ugliеſt brats* *, none ſeem ſo inevitably expos'd to this *fatality*, as thoſe whoſe religion is to have no *form*, but ſuch as it receives from their own hearts.

Thirdly, A man that has his religion to chuſe, and with this previous privilege, that he need not allow any thing to be matter of religion, but what his own right reaſon can prove to be ſo, is in as fair a way to be govern'd by his *paſſions*, as he that has his *condition* of life to chuſe, with the liberty of taking that which his own right reaſon directs him to.

Does any one ſuppoſe now, that nothing but *right reaſon* would direct him in the choice of his condition? Or that he would make the better choice, becauſe he proceeded upon this maxim, that nothing could be right, but that which was agreeable to his *own reaſon?* Or that his tempers, his prejudices, his ſelf-love, his paſſions, his partiality, would have no influence upon his choice, becauſe he had reſign'd himſelf up to his *own right reaſon?*

For as our choice of a condition of life is not a matter of ſpeculation, but of good and evil; ſo however it is recommended to

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our

our reaſon, it chiefly excites our paſſions, and our choice will be juſt as reaſonable, as our tempers and paſſions are. And he that is made the moſt poſitive of the ſufficiency of his own right reaſon, will be the moſt likely to be govern'd by the blindneſs of his own paſſions.

Now it is juſt the ſame in the choice of a religion, as in the choice of a condition of life: as it is not a matter of ſpeculation, but of *good* and *evil*; ſo if it is left to be ſtated and determin'd by our *own reaſon*, it rather appeals to our *tempers*, than employs our reaſon; and to reſign ourſelves up to our own reaſon, to tell us what ought or not to be a matter of religion, is only reſigning ourſelves up to our tempers to take what we *like*, and refuſe what we *diſlike* in religion.

For it is not only natural and eaſy for him, who believes that nothing can be a part of religion, but what his reaſon can prove neceſſary to be ſo; to take that to be *fully prov'd*, which is only *mightily lik'd*; and all that to be entirely contrary to *reaſon*, which is only vaſtly contrary to his *tempers*; this, I ſay, is not only natural and eaſy to happen, but ſcarce poſſible to be avoided.

In a word; When *ſelf-love* is a proper arbitrator betwixt a man and his adverſary; when *revenge* is a juſt judge of meekneſs; when *pride* is a true lover of humility; when *falſhood* is a teacher of truth; when *luſt* is a faſt friend of chaſtity; when the *fleſh* leads to the ſpirit; when *ſenſuality* delights

lights in self-denial; when *partiality* is a promoter of equity; when the *palate* can taste the difference between sin and holiness; when the *hand* can feel the truth of a proposition, then may *human reason* be a proper arbitrator between God and man, the sole, final, just judge of all that ought, or ought not to be matter of a *holy*, *divine* and *heavenly* religion.

Again: If this be the state of reason, as has been fully prov'd; if all we believe or disbelieve, love or hate, chuse or refuse; if all that is wise or absurd, holy or prophane, glorious or shameful in thought, word or deed, is to be imputed to it; then it is as gross an absurdity to talk of the absolute perfection of *human reason*, as of the unspotted holiness of *human life*, the absolute purity of *human love*, the immutable justice of *human hatred*, and the absolute infallibility of *human conjectures*.

Lastly, To pretend that our reason is too perfect to be govern'd by any thing but its own light, is the same extravagance, as to pretend, that our love is *too pure* to be govern'd by any thing but its own inclinations, our hatred *too just* to be govern'd by any thing but its own motions. For if all that is base and criminal in love, all that is unjust and wicked in hatred, is strictly and solely to be imputed to our reason; then no perfection can be ascrib'd to our reason, but such as is to be ascrib'd to our love and hatred.

F I N I S.